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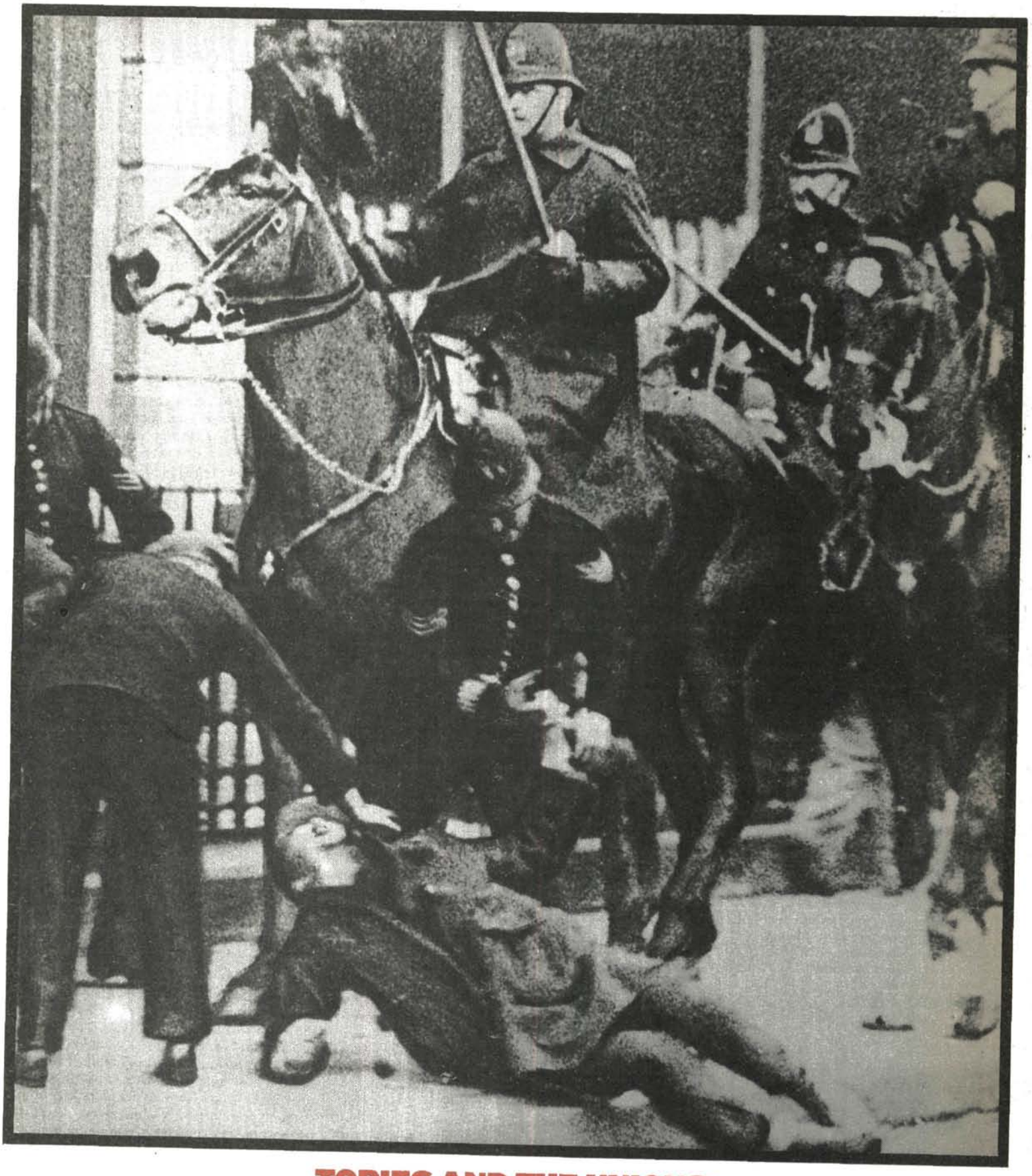

TORIES AND THE UNIONS:
A modest proposal

The imperial style of Mr Haughey/ Pundits IV: Paul Johnson
Why the steel workers are striking

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NEW STATESMAN

Volume 98 14 December 1979 No 2543

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The way of the dinosaur

CHRISTMAS and New Year are natural times for governments to publish embarrassing reports, and so the public may soon be able to buy copies of the bulky Finniston Report on engineering. Its main proposal, for an Engineering Authority to register engineers and command British technological education, has been extensively leaked, and is not the sort of thing Sir Keith Joseph is apt to welcome – if only because the cost is put at £25 million a year. What has not yet been realised is the extent to which the full text, while remaining studiously 'non-political', constitutes a wholesale demolition of the Tories' *laissez-faire* theory of British economic recovery.

The report is essentially the work of engineers reporting on themselves, and to their enormous credit they have broken with the ancient idea that our professions should escape public accountability. The profession of engineering, according to Finniston and his colleagues, is in a first-class mess: and it is high time to realise that the principal interest in the regulation of a profession should be the requirements of society at large, and not the interests of the profession's members. A useful comparison may be made between the Finniston Report, which proposes to place the regulation of engineering squarely into the public domain – entailing many painful and overdue adjustments – with the extraordinary complacency of the recent Royal Commission on Legal Services.

The document no doubt has its flaws. But it is wholly plain-spoken on the lunacies of present government policy. The cutbacks in higher education are categorised as deplorable. The policy of discouraging foreign students – thus reducing the establishments of most of our engineering schools – is exposed for the self-destructive miserliness that it always was. Labour's failure, compounded by the Tories, to give proper financial support to children who want to stay on in school is shown to be myopic. Will Thatcher, Joseph, Boyson & Co be allowed to brush these warnings aside?

FINNISTON TRIES to confront a mystery which will exercise social archaeologists if Britain does go the way of the dinosaur and the pterodactyl. How did a nation which, more than any other, invented the discipline of engineering – the machine tools, the empirical techniques, the industrial system itself – and which has always been centrally dependent for its livelihood on the products of engineering, come almost absent-mindedly to mislay its command? Which Jerusalem, exactly, did we forget, so that our right hand became enfeebled?

Nothing is more curious than the fact that every report, from Lyon Playfair in the 1850s and down to the present, has given just the same warning and been just as thoroughly ignored. During almost the whole of that disgraceful 150 years, with only the slightest modification at the end, the gods of free enterprise – the gods now invoked for rescue – reigned supreme. They have brought us to the edge of ruin.

What the Finniston Report will provide, for those who lack time to comb through the scattered records of technological history, is the evidence of the peculiar incompetence and irresponsibility of British capitalism. It is not necessary to be in love with the industrial capitalists of Germany, Scandinavia and Japan to see that in different (and indeed imperfect ways) they have acknowledged since long past their own responsibility to provide for the technological education of their workers: to offer recognition and responsibility to some, at least, of those who create industrial wealth, as against those who speculate (occasionally usefully) in its instant values. And it would be interesting to see some Tory theorist try to show that, over this long-haul period, those more technologically serious cultures have outdone ours in zealous adherence to free-enterprise ideology. The truth is the other way: theirs are histories which exhibit either a distinct socialist bias, or a notable impatience with any capitalist dogma which might inhibit industrial and technological renewal.

THERE IS NOT much comfort in the Finniston Report for anyone who hopes that simple monetary incentives might change everything. British engineers do not seem to be especially badly paid compared to other professions (though there are nasty problems about differentials among skilled manual workers). The trouble is not that industry will not pay some engineers tolerably well. It is rather that it will not hire enough engineers, and will not take seriously enough the work of those it does hire.

Especially instructive sections of the analysis deal with private industry's complaints about 'shortages' of engineers. On examination this turns out often to be a shortage of perfectly formed engineers who can be relied upon to function brilliantly in the absence of any training effort on the part of the employer. Anyone who shows up incorporating, ready-made, the qualities of Leonardo, Charles Steinmetz and Frank Whittle will certainly be hired by Moribund Engineering Ltd (a subsidiary of Megalocorp): provided, that is, he doesn't have any fancy notions about a place on the board.

There is no 'free market' answer to problems as deep-rooted as this: nor, in honesty, are there any easy socialist answers. And, most important of all, the Finniston Report shows that this time the warning will have to be taken seriously – because now, there are only eight or ten years left to get some kind of action under way. Similar reports have been ignored in the past, precisely because 'people have been saying this kind of thing for a hundred years'. So they have, and now the time is up.

Finniston's argument is a complex one, and we shall return to it soon in detail. It concerns not only the rate of decay of Britain's industrial base, but also the demography of our student population. Within a few years, the proportion of young people in the community will begin to decline quite sharply: therefore, the overall pool of candidates for training will shrink. Unless, in the meantime, genuinely new opportunities are made, Britain will fall so far behind the other industrial societies that all prospect of catching-up will become wholly implausible.

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NOTES

Return of the toll

Stephen Marks writes: Private tollroads could be due for a comeback, under the latest Tory proposals for hiving public functions off to the private sector. A report on the controversial Southern Relief Road, approved last week by the Greater London Council's planning and transport committee, considers installing tollgates and asking private developers for a contribution, as one possible solution to the problem of financing the £240m. project.

The road, held by County Hall's Tory administration to be a key part of the masterplan to attract private industry to docklands, is opposed by local residents, as it would slice through a park, cut swathes through local housing, and end by simply shifting traffic jams from one end of South London to another. But the plan is also running into financial problems, so the Government shows no signs of helping out with the massive cost, which would take up nearly half London's total capital road-building programme. Hence the proposal for Britain's first tolled urban road – at least since the days when Dick Turpin roamed Hampstead Heath. The report concedes that a toll 'would divert some traffic to less desirable routes'. But 'the prospect for a toll in docklands might well be attractive to private developers interested in sharing the cost of road building for a return on their outlay in one form or another'.

Debt charges for the scheme – which would get a 75 per cent government grant – would amount to £9m. a year, with another £1m. for maintenance, including the cost of tollgates, the report estimates. 'It is reasonable to suppose that at a toll of between 10p and 25p, it would be possible to recover the whole of the maintenance costs and perhaps a tiny proportion of the debt charges.' But this would leave little gravy for the investors. In effect, the proposal comes down to the idea of asking employers in the area if they think the road proposal worth paying for on its merits.

Meanwhile, progress on the road plan has run into another snag, due to a different form of private sector involvement. County Hall unions are up in arms about the proposal (ostensibly to save money) to put the planning work on the road out to private consultants, instead of using the existing GLC planning staff.

Colombia's show trials

Phil Gunson writes: It will be interesting to see whether Fleet Street can scrape together a tithe of the righteous indignation it expended on the recent trial of five Czechs when commenting (if at all) on a series of show trials which have just begun in Colombia. The defendants number several hundred, and are to be court martialled for alleged membership of guerrilla groups. Though equipped with the paraphernalia of democracy, Colombia has in fact been in a state of siege for most of the last 30 years. The power of military courts to try civilians was further extended last year by incoming President Julio Cesar Turbay, under Decree 1923 (the 'Security Statute'), a piece of legislation aimed at crushing organised opposition to the regime.

It is under Decree 1923 that the accused are to be tried principally for 'rebellion' or 'conspiracy', each of which carries a maximum sentence of 14 years. Many have been brutally tortured, including 19-year-old student Maria Etty Marin, who needed crutches and the support of two friends to walk into the courtroom on 21 November – six months after her arrest.

Military courts are responsible to the executive, not the judiciary (the President is also Commander-in-Chief). All the court officials, including judge, 'jury' and prosecuting counsel, are military officers on active service, and the trials are to be held *inside* prisons and army barracks, 'to prevent escapes'. This also has the effect of limiting access. Journalists allowed in for the formal opening of the first trial were immediately ejected thereafter, while the defence counsel were excluded altogether. Under a new decree, the prosecution case does not have to be read out in court, and this eliminates the defence's opportunity to prepare its case. The only available alternative is to read the one copy to which they are entitled, at the rate of *one calendar day per 1000 pages*. It is worth noting that the defendants at the opening trial number 219. According to the decree itself, the reason for this new rule is that reading out the prosecution case 'prolongs the trial unnecessarily'. It might also give the defence the chance to tear holes in the so-called 'evidence', much of which is unsubstantiated written testimony extracted under torture.

The right of military courts to try civilians for 'subversion' is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court by the Procurator General, whose job is to investigate alleged judicial irregularities. The Procurator says he is convinced these trials are unconstitutional, and of the existence of torture. He is one of a growing band of influential critics, including members of the political commission of the ruling Liberal Party, who, according to Defence Minister General Luis Camacho, are either 'subversives' or 'senile'. President Turbay has declared there are no political prisoners in Colombia, and even claimed prisoners were torturing themselves so as to discredit the government.

Last week defence lawyers at one of the trials called three witnesses to support their contention that several of the defendants were in Bogota at the time of an ambush of which they are accused. For this temerity the judge ordered all three witnesses,

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together with one of the lawyers, to be arrested. They are now awaiting trial on charges of 'perjury' and 'adulteration of evidence'. Protests from the other lawyers led to their expulsion from the court.

PLO's rejectionism

Ian Black writes from Jerusalem: Several influential political figures in the West Bank have expressed deep concern over reports that Palestine Liberation Organisation official Issam Sartawi may lose his job after accepting a human rights prize together with a leading Israeli dove. They include a number of mayors and prominent intellectuals, whose loyalty to the PLO is unquestionable and who believe that punishing Sartawi, the PLO's representative in Europe and a senior member of Yasser Arafat's Al-Fatah group, would discourage further dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

Two months ago Sartawi shared a $24,000 award from Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky together with Arye Eliav, a former leader of the left-wing Sheli party, for their efforts in seeking common ground between the PLO and Israelis. Recent reports from Beirut have said that Sartawi's membership of the Palestine National Council – the PLO's 'parliament' – may be suspended pending an investigation into his acceptance of the prize with Eliav. Moderate Palestinians in the occupied territories have expressed serious concern about these reports, arguing that any such punishment would have serious implications for future PLO dialogue with those few Israelis who are prepared to support the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

The calls for punishment for Sartawi appear to be emanating from Palestinian rejectionist and left-wing groups angered by the success of his recent diplomatic offensive in Western Europe – which bought Arafat closer than ever to genuine recognition – and by his pro-American orientation. Sartawi proved sufficiently versatile, with Kreisky's help, to find himself on the same aeroplane as Milton Wolff, Washington's ambassador in Vienna – one of the hidden facts about the PLO-American connection which came tumbling out after the Andrew Young affair. Both he and Arafat have come under fire from the rejectionists in the past, but what is worrying this time is that it was Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Arafat's number two in Fatah and a member of the PLO's executive committee, who announced that Sartawi would stand trial. And, as one informed observer commented this week: 'When these people put someone on trial they don't intend to acquit him.'

West Bank concern over the affair reflects not only a sense of political reality apparently acquired by proximity to the Israeli left, but also anger that the PLO's most valuable diplomatic operator should fall victim to the rejectionist line (clearly welcomed by the Eastern bloc) that opposes Western European or American involvement in the search for a solution to the Palestinian problem.

Will UMIST close?

Jim Wilson writes: If the Government persists with its plan to increase foreign student fees then the casualties will include not just thousands of foreign students but one or two British universities as well. And top of the threatened list is the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) where one-third of all students are from abroad. 'We can't cope with economies of this kind. If the Government continues to push us we could fall flat on our faces and that will mean bankruptcy,' warns Professor Robert Haszeldine, Principal of UMIST. 'I hope, and I'm sure it will never come to a question of closure but that is the direction the government is pushing us,' he adds grimly.

The arithmetic is simple. The government has told the University Grants Committee to reduce its allocation to the universities by 13 per cent next year (on the arbitrary assumption that 13 per cent of students are from overseas) and has recommended new fees for overseas students rising from the present £940 for undergraduates and £1,230 for postgraduates to £2,000 for arts courses, £3,000 for science and £5,000 for medicine. But at UMIST, with 32 per cent of the student population from overseas, the university estimates it will have to charge £3,800 next year if it is to survive.

'Our evidence,' claims Professor Haszeldine, 'is that only between 50 to 70 per cent of foreign students will be able to afford to return next year'. And it is that subsequent drop in income which worries the university most. To put it bluntly: if UMIST loses one-third of its income it is bankrupt. Only half of UMIST's foreign students are financed by Government: the rest are self-supporting. While some governments will gladly pay out the higher charges, others will reluctantly look to West Germany and the Soviet Union where fees are substantially lower. Indeed British fees will soon be among the highest in the world.

Most of UMIST's foreign students are already feeling the pinch after this year's 40 per cent increase in fees. 'Remember,' one student pointed out, 'our visas don't even allow us to supplement our grant by working. And while there are many wealthy students here there are also a great many on the bread-line.' 'The proposals have not been clearly thought out,' argues Professor Haszeldine, explaining that British industry which last year gave £2.5m to UMIST derives a great deal of benefit from the high level of research carried out at the university – much of it done by foreign students.

Policing the radio

Denis MacShane writes from Geneva: After 74 days of talks the World Administrative Radio Conference has fizzled out with a remarkable reaffirmation of the status quo as perceived by the US and Russia. Held only every 20 years, the conference successfully dodged major problems of international radio communication thrown up since 1959: the role of satellites, the expansion of local radio stations and direct one-to-one radio communications.

The Soviet Union successfully managed to stave off an effective regulation and policing of high frequency – shortwave – bands. Officially Russian external broadcasts should stick to pre-ordained wavebands given to Russia following international agreement. What, in fact, the Russians do is hunt the wavebands allocated to individual third world countries, searching for a frequency that is not being used, and then shunt their propaganda output onto that waveband. This breaks all the international rules but was unchallenged in Geneva.

The US secured protection against any substantial expansion of high frequency bands used inside countries for fixed-point transmission. Fixed-point short-wave transmission is effectively a telephone system operating on radio waves. It was cumbersome and expensive until the recent developments in miniaturisation and lowering of prices which now mean that for a poor country it is probably cheaper to install a fixed-point HF system as the national system of voice-to-voice communication. That goes against the desires and profits of the giant telecommunications multinationals like ITT.

The most disturbing omission from the WARC agenda is the question of the potential explosion in radio communication that micro-technology now allows to take place. As 2,000 pirate – though legal – radio stations in Italy have shown, it is now easier and cheaper to communicate with people by radio than through traditional print means. In France, the Socialist Party and the French unions have started operating pirate – and illegal – radio stations, the unions opening them for the duration of major strikes. All this was unmentioned in Geneva where the governments of East Europe, third world and western countries have a common interest in keeping the people's hand off the radio dial.

More Labour women

Frances Morrell writes: Another step has been taken in the campaign to get more women MPs and more genuine women's representation on the Labour Party's national executive. If all goes according to plan, next year's Labour Party conference will be debating the mandatory inclusion of a woman and a manual worker in all short lists of candidates interviewed by local party selection conferences.

At their annual general meeting last week the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy decided to back this idea and also to campaign for the NEC's women section to be elected by the Labour Party Women's Conference, instead of by the male-dominated national conference.

It has taken three years to get the CLPD to adopt a policy of positive discrimination and even this year, despite overwhelming support from the AGM, it only just scraped past the CLPD executive.

The key to successfully selling the idea in the party as a whole is the linking together of manual workers and women. This will make it much easier to get the support of trades unions and the constituency parties, who will now be systematically canvassed to back the proposals when submitted to next year's conference, in the hope that the appropriate constitutional change can be made in 1981. If the NEC decided to support the proposals the changes could be made in 1980, ensuring that the wave of selection conferences triggered by mandatory reselection would be subject to positive discrimination rules.

Powerful opposition to these proposals can be expected from Joyce Gould, Labour's deputy national agent, whose view that women should compete with men on merit alone commanded widespread support at last year's Labour Party Women's Conference.

Meanwhile at Congress House, the 41-strong General Council is deliberating on a demand from its own Women's Advisory Committee that the number of women in its ranks should be increased from 2 to 7. It appears to be unsympathetic.

Repressing mathematics

Duncan Campbell writes: The activities of British and American intelligence agencies now extend to attacking academic freedom. The US National Security Agency has been waging a quiet campaign to get publication of some independent mathematical research restricted on grounds of 'national security'. They are imminently expected to introduce amendments into a new US law on controlling exports, presently known HR4074, which would prohibit the distribution overseas of certain kinds of mathematical research.

The attack is motivated by the desire of NSA to make their job of reading coded messages as simple as possible. Since the end of the second world war, a giant Anglo-American partnership has carried out massive and costly espionage on everyone else's secret messages, a process called signals intelligence – 'sigint' (NS 2 February). But the new sophistication of microelectronics coupled with recent remarkable mathematical advances threaten to make many communications too expensive to unscramble.

Some researchers are developing ways of sending data using more conventional codes and, in public, trying ways of breaking codes by sophisticated computer techniques to test their security. NSA wishes a plague on all their houses; earlier this year the NSA's director, Rear Admiral Bobby Inman, avowed his desire for legislation to control research and publications of a 'central core of critical cryptologic information . . . that is likely to have a discernable adverse impact on national security'.

Since Inman's speech, according to Professor Ronald Rivest of MIT, agency officials have been quietly taking soundings on what NSA could get away with. To date, there have been attempts to make profitable patents secret, to curb grant awards in areas of mathematics connected to cryptography, and a notorious letter threatening academics with prosecution for publishing their research.

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The modest proposal of James Prior

Outraged by 'moderate' voices canvassing the decimation of Ireland, Jonathan Swift put forward his 'modest proposal' for solving the country's problems by selling off babies as foodstuff. James Prior's Employment Bill has been widely acclaimed (and attacked in some quarters) as a 'moderate' measure. But, as JEREMY McMULLEN argues, the term 'modest' suits it better.

ALTHOUGH UNEMPLOYMENT has doubled since the 1971 Industrial Relations Bill, union membership has never been higher. More than 50 per cent of working people now belong to a trade union, and according to a new survey by the London School of Economics and the Department of Employment, almost half of all trade unionists are in some form of closed shop.

It is not surprising, then, that it should be a matter of paramount importance to the Tories to tackle working class organisation. They are cutting health, educational, social and transport services. They are hiving off unionised public sector operations to private enterprise and, having castrated the National Enterprise Board, they are allowing Michael Edwardes to launch a vicious attack on trade union activity at BL. Government aid to industry and the regions is being cut by £212 million, and the Health and Safety and Manpower Services Commissions are to be stripped to the bone.

With all this already under way, James Prior's contribution hardly needs to be of the full frontal variety favoured by his predecessor, the subsequently ennobled Robert Carr. Certainly, his Employment Bill does not reflect the worst excesses of Tory dogma. For example, it doesn't impose any new sanctions on workers who cause commercial contracts to be broken in the course of a dispute. Nor are union officials or peripatetic workers to be banned from picket lines. And the High Court has not been given a *carte blanche* to romp through unions' membership policies. Nevertheless, if one looks through the smokescreen of detail at the fundamental principles at stake, the Bill can be seen as an unashamedly sectarian challenge to organised workers. It aims to curb five aspects of trade union life: recruitment, collective bargaining, organisation, industrial action and internal democracy.

The activities of the NGA and SLADE are cited as justification for the creation of seven grounds of civil liability outlawing types of union recruitment. If you ask your workmates to black a non-union made product you would be liable to pay damages to the non-union employer if your purpose was to get his employees to join the union. The only exception to this would be if non-union labour is working for your own employer, or on your site. The Tories are repaying their Manifesto commitment to advertising agencies who have been faced with increasing unionisation as a result of NGA and SLADE policy, yet the effect goes far beyond the printing industry.

Collective bargaining will be hit by the proposed repeal of major parts of Labour's Employment Protection Act. Almost unreported by Fleet Street is the government's intention to abolish the procedure by which a union can apply to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service in disputes with employers over recognition. ACAS has been criticised by both sides of industry and the courts for the way it has carried out its duties, but this is because it has doggedly sought to improve industrial relations and extend collective bargaining, while being denied legal powers to compel employers to give the most basic information and co-operation. Without such powers, it was unable to ballot Grunwick workers in 1977 and this forced the union to step up its direct action. Prior has said that he hopes to avoid 'another Grunwick'. After his abolition of a constitutional route to recognition this is just nauseating hypocrisy – most unions would use ACAS instead of the streets if ACAS's powers had been *strengthened*.

'This Bill makes a mockery of consultation.
It even ignores the Donovan Commission
It's based on political dogma –
But turning the proposals into legislation
Is the most backward step facing this na-shun.'

So sang Horace James and his Steel Band in that memorable number *Co-operate Not Legislate*, recorded and released in 1971 by the TUC, with the blustery voice of Vic Feather on the B side. The TUC will need to provide a sharper initial response to the 1980 version of the Industrial Relations Bill.

Bargaining over pay parity in companies which undercut the going rate is also to be affected by the repeal of Schedule 11 of the Employment Protection Act. The Engineering Employers Federation 'deplored' this move which would facilitate wage cutting by rival firms and lead to unfair competition. It is, though, a direct method of suppressing wage increases.

The union roles in representing members in disciplinary procedures has already been weakened by a measure implemented in October, which increased the qualifying period (from six to 12 months' service) for claims of unfair dismissal. Employers already win 72 per cent of tribunal dismissal cases, and under Prior's bill they will be relieved of the burden of proving they acted reasonably. Instead, the tribunals will decide, after considering 'the size and administrative resources' of the employer. In the field of safety, where reasonableness is again the test, the Carlisle tribunal has stood firmly against such an approach:

> It will not do . . . to tell large and prosperous company A that they must set matters right in a month because they can afford to do so, and to tell small struggling company B that they can take two years over the same job, or wait until trade looks up.

The Bill attacks industrial action by confining the illusory 'right' to picket to current or sacked employees at their own place of work, and their union officials. The only exception is for people who work in a number of places (eg drivers, dustmen) or where picketing is 'impracticable', in which case it is permissible to picket at administrative offices. Any other pickets can be sued by an employer in dispute, or customers and suppliers, or even non-striking employees, and the likelihood of police prosecution is enormous. Worse, the arrival of unlicensed pickets can legally infect lawful pickets making them liable too. The proposal on picketing is designed to stop trade union and community solidarity in disputes, a factor that always riles Conservative leaders. They want no mass support in the locality, no delegations to a company's head office or associated sites, no trips to suppliers' or customers' premises.

In the public eye, and in Prior's presentation, pickets have extensive rights which are frequently abused. This is a gross distortion of the truth, as three distinguished labour lawyers explain in an excellent pamphlet*:

> The belief that legal weapons must be used to cut trade unions down to size is displayed most clearly in the proposals on picketing and the right to take industrial action. These are intelligible only if certain myths surrounding the existing law are dissolved:- the belief, for example, that there is in the present law any extensive right to picket peacefully; that unions are 'above the law'; or that trade unionists' 'immunities' are some kind of privilege rather than the British legal form of basic democratic liberties.

One hundred per cent unionism will disappear as the grounds for opting out are 'extended' to anyone who 'objects on grounds of conscience or other deeply-held personal conviction to being a member of any trade union whatsoever *or of a particular trade union*' (emphasis added). Industrial tribunals will have to assess the genuineness of every objector's belief and the queue of disgruntled former union members will be endless. Existing non-members will have the right to stay out and all new agreements after the Bill is passed must be approved by 80 per cent of the shop in a secret ballot. If a union puts pressure on an employer to sack a non-unionist, the union can be ordered to pay compensation.

All this is wrapped up in the best High Tory style as freedom for individuals, defence of human rights and even as the only solution to the UK's comparatively low productivity. This point was echoed by *The Times* leader writer on 8 December, while at the same time grasping the real reason for the attack on the closed shop:

> Where there is a closed shop the people working in that shop can normally control the technology that is employed and the conditions under which that technology is worked.

Having wrested control of one aspect of workplace conditions, control over work methods, production, technology, discipline, marketing and investment can follow.

The final assault on union development comes in the form of a challenge to internal union democracy. People unreasonably or arbitrarily expelled from *or refused admission to* a union will be given the right to claim up to £16,000 in compensation if they work in an industry where union membership is required. Yet no sanction is imposed on employers who unreasonably or arbitrarily refuse to employ anyone. And up to £2 million a year is to be

**Industrial Relations Law and the Conservative Government* by Roy Lewis, Paul Davies and Bill Wedderburn, Fabian Society.

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made available to unions to conduct ballots, a move which will readily be supported by managements seeking to undercut negotiating committees by direct and untimely appeals to the membership.

The Bill, then, is part of a general challenge to the working class. Based on falsehood and scaremongering the Bill is specifically designed to subvert trade union influence in workplace relations, and to restrain wages. (The pickets at Charing Cross hospital are untouched by proposals but were frequently given as examples of the sort of authority that needed to be curbed.) It is expected to be law by the early summer, but before then the Government may well introduce more restrictive amendments following House of Lords decisions in two secondary action cases involving the International Transport Workers and the NUJ.

Jeremy McMullen is a regional officer of the General and Municipal Workers' Union and author of *Rights at Work* (Pluto Press).

IRELAND
Mary Holland

Why Mr Haughey appeals to a nation which is sick to death of apologising

A man who will not be patronised

THERE HAVE BEEN two occasions in recent months when Irish journalists have broken into spontaneous applause at the start of a press conference. The first was when Pope John Paul II, at the end of his first day in Ireland, came to have a few broken words with representatives of the world's media. The second was last Friday when Charles Haughey sat down under a romanticised portrait of Robert Emmet in the Fianna Fail meeting room in Leinster House for his very first appearance as the newly elected leader of his party. In both cases, one suspects, the journalists' euphoria had much more to do with expressing a pent-up and frustrated nationalism than with any objective consideration of what the individual they were applauding represented.

The Pope arrived in Ireland in the wake of the Mountbatten murders when most people were still smarting from being labelled as an entire nation of 'murdering bastards' by the British popular press. The Papal visit came as healing balm to the Irish crowds for his message was one of compassion for a country still caught in the trap of post-colonial history, and one of admiration that even during the worst of that history the Irish people had remained loyal to their Christian beliefs and – by none too subtle extension – to the fatherland.

The reaction to the Pope's visit had at least something of the spiritual. The crackle of excitement palpable among the press last Friday at the news of Mr Haughey's victory was unashamedly temporal and chauvinistic. There have been thousands of words written already to explain his near miraculous comeback to the leadership of his party within ten years of standing trial for illegally importing arms for the use of the IRA: there had been the country's economic malaise, the rout of Fianna Fail in recent by-elections, the chipping away of Jack Lynch's authority, particularly on the issue of Northern policy. Another crucial factor – and this should interest Mrs Thatcher who came to power for much the same reasons herself – was the discontented feeling among the party's backbenchers that Fianna Fail seemed to have lost its way and its own confidence in the Republican ideals on which it was founded.

Yet none of this can quite account for the mood which swept the assembled press and, if *vox pop* are anything to go by, much of the country at Mr Haughey's arrival as Taoiseach. Nor can it be attributed to anything as simple as the belief held in England that the new Irish premier is going 'to get tough' on the North, since any really 'tough' departure from the present policy on Northern Ireland would be deeply alarming to most people on this side of the border. True Mr Haughey made much of his own Northern background at that first press conference, but he also made it clear that he was committed to his party's 1975 policy statement on the issue. While this called on the British to encourage the unity of Ireland, it also emphasised that unity could only come about 'by agreement and in harmony between the two islands'.

It was strange to see that his condemnation of the Provisional IRA was greeted with the same emphatic nods of agreement from the ecstatic backbenchers massed behind his chair as were his remarks on the reunification of Ireland. The truth is, and Mr Haughey knows it, that while many of the Fianna Fail backbenchers who put him where he is care deeply about a united Ireland, they have not begun to think out its implications. They will depend on Mr Haughey to do that for them.

Charles Haughey: old policies, but an exciting new approach.

IT IS EARLY DAYS to speculate on how Mr Haughey will differ in detail from Mr Lynch on policy towards Northern Ireland. He himself has said that his differences are likely to be ones of emphasis. But it is worth remarking that the capacity of the new Taoiseach's own supporters for doublethink on the issue, and in particular on the IRA, is virtually boundless. If the necessity arises Mr Haughey will be capable, as was his eminent predecessor Eamonn De Valera, of dealing with the utmost ferocity with the IRA and it will be easier for him to do so because his party believes – as they never quite believed of Mr Lynch – that Mr Haughey does want the British out of Ireland.

And here one comes at last to the reason why his election as leader of Fianna Fail has given unexpected pleasure to numbers of people who almost certainly disagree with most of his politics and mistrust his extremely personal style of conducting them. The first ten minutes of Mr Haughey's inaugural press conference were taken up with answering questions from British journalists. As so often when the British press addresses itself to Irish politicians the tone was hectoring to the point of offensiveness. What was different this time was the tenor of the replies. Where Jack Lynch and other Irish politicians in a similar situation have seemed at pains to pacify, reason, explain that the Irish are not a breed of murderers and thugs, so that Irish people listening have been moved to angry defensiveness, it quickly became clear that no such reaction would be prompted by Mr Haughey. He answered the questions swiftly, even acidly, but this time the sneer seemed to be on his lips as though signalling to his own people: 'Just who do they think they are coming over here and trying to bully me, all of us, about our country?' As a nation the Irish are sick to death of apologising, of being patronised, of having to remind themselves, constantly, that they are a sovereign nation and not, as the British often seem to think, some subdivision of the UK whose head of government can be summoned to Downing Street to be lectured about his people's misdeeds. Whatever else one thinks of Charles Haughey he is not likely to be patronised by a British prime minister and for that reason alone a lot of Irish people are willing to give him a fair run for his money.

Two weeks ago I wrote in the NEW STATESMAN that the emergence of John Hume as leader of the Catholic minority in the North marked a substantial change in Anglo-Irish politics. The same must be said of the arrival of Charles Haughey as head of the Dublin government. For a decade now the British government has attempted, with little inclination for the task and less success, to solve the Ulster problem by a mixture of compromise and inactivity. This has happened, at least in part, because politicians on this side of the Irish Sea, having little real alternative policy to offer, have been more or less willing to co-operate.

That period is over. For better or worse, and it need not be for worse, the three voices that matter in Anglo-Irish affairs now are those of Charles Haughey, the Rev. Ian Paisley and John Hume. If that combination seems alarming it at least has the advantage that each of the three men represents the authentic mood of his own community and can deliver its support. As politicians the three have quite a lot in common. They are tough, pragmatic and they have learnt a great deal from the experience and the appalling bloodshed of the past ten years. None of them is likely to have much patience with the current British policy of equivocation and drift. They will all be looking for action. True, the action they are looking for from the British government is very different, but the same is true at the start of every round of negotiations. What is important is that while all three are hard bargainers, they also know that politics is the art of the possible. For Mrs Thatcher, at least, their combined presence must represent one additional attraction. At last in Ireland there are politicians who actively want to take the Northern Irish problem out of Britain's hands.

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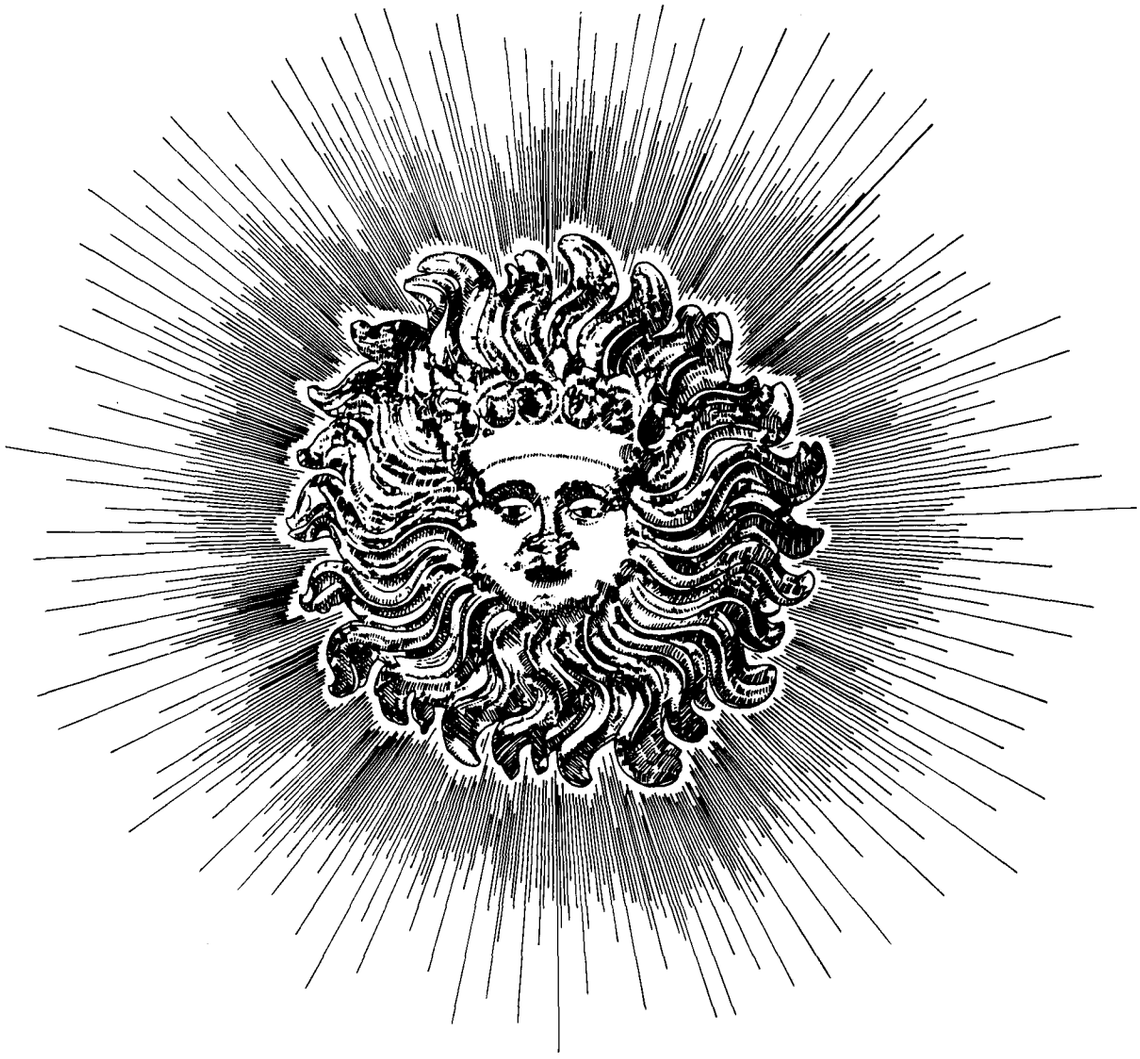

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POLITICS
David Hughes & David Kogan

The constabulary are looking into St John-Stevas's election expenses

Norman's cheap conquest

THE DIRECTOR OF Public Prosecutions and Essex police have been carrying out a highly detailed investigation into the Conservatives' general election expenses in Norman St John-Stevas's Chelmsford constituency. The investigation is the outcome of a challenge from the Liberal agent, Mrs Elizabeth Bottomley, which itself followed the Tories' challenging of the Liberals' expenses. The possible charges could be very serious – overspending, falsification of the expenses form and omission of various items; any of which could mean a by-election in Chelmsford. The seat would be an important test for the Tories, since their majority over the Liberals is an assailable eight per cent.

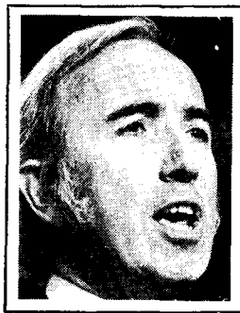
The Liberal candidate, Councillor Stuart Mole, is reluctant to give details of the Liberals' submission, and Mr St John-Stevas will not talk about the affair while the papers are at the DPP; but our own examination of Mr St John-Stevas's election expenses, as given to the constituency town hall, reveals his apparent forgetfulness of some of his own meetings and the extraordinarily low cost of his campaign materials.

For instance, the hire of rooms is always an expensive part of a candidate's election budget. Both the Liberal and Labour candidates spent a considerable portion of their budgets on the hiring of committee rooms: Mole spent £385.79, or 13 per cent of his total budget; Susan Reeves, the Labour candidate, spent £148 – which was 12.2 per cent of hers. Mr St John-Stevas's expenditure on committee rooms was £47, and £25 of this was spent on his campaign headquarters. This means that a mere 1.4 per cent of his total budget went on as many as 44 committee rooms and the headquarters. It is an especially strange figure when it is remembered that the headquarters was used for 4 weeks: at £25 to cover the hire, heating, lighting and cleaning of the premises that's £1.08 a day, for eight hours use per day.

At least one entry for the committee rooms attracts attention. The expenses form shows a figure of 50 pence for the annexe to Keene Hall. There is no annexe to Keene Hall, but there is an extension which at the time of the election went at a rate of 75 pence an hour, with a minimum of £2.60 to parishioners. For the charge to be 50 pence on a polling day lasting 15 hours, the committee room must have been open for a mere 40 minutes.

It is often claimed that expenditure on various rooms can be divided between the parliamentary candidate and his local government counterpart, but even if this were acceptable the Chelmsford charge would still be below the full commercial cost for a day's hire. Under the Representation of the People Act the full commercial value of donations of rooms or facilities must be declared.

The real surprises in the expenses form are contained in the part dealing with Stevas's public meetings. There are two conspicuous omissions. The first is for Stevas's own adoption meeting in the Shire Hall. The second, equally startling, is for one covered by local and national press – a meeting addressed by Sir Richard Marsh at the Keene Hall in Chelmsford on 29 April. There is no mention of this meeting or its cost.



Norman St John-Stevas: where did the money go?

Of other items there are at least two which can be questioned. A figure not lumped in with 'printing and stationery' is that for Stevas's election envelopes. The sum mentioned is £51.77 – which seems large until it is realised that they would have been used for at least one election address to every voter in the constituency, and with 84,182 of these that means 1,619 envelopes for every £1 spent.

There is a similar lack of logic around the telephone charges during the campaign. Stevas's bill is down as a mere £21.76 to cover the whole election period. In comparison the Liberals spent £83.81. Anyone who has worked in a campaign knows the importance of a telephone in the campaign headquarters and the extent to which it is used to contact committee rooms, the party's central office and all the other suppliers of goods.

The importance of these very small sums is that Stevas's campaign was very near the legal limit of his expenses. According to Chelmsford town hall this was £3,433.64 and Stevas is a mere £64.28 under it. Any large additions could result in Stevas – who signed the expenses return – being charged with overspending.

One per cent richer

Michael Meacher writes: In six months the present Tory Government has engineered the most massive redistribution of income yet achieved in Britain since the last war, not excepting Barber's efforts in 1971-2. And the latest increase in mortgage interest rates has exacerbated these inequalities still further.

The Treasury answer to a Parliamentary Question last month gave me a table setting out the income tax gains per household from the Budget (excluding the effects of the VAT increase) at nine different levels of income. It ranged from a mere 87p per week for the family living on less than £40 a week, up to £77 a week for families receiving more than £20,000 a year. The Treasury declined to reveal gains for the rich above £20,000 a year. Nevertheless, for the highest paid man in Britain, Mr Norman Castle, chairman of S. & W. Berisford, the sugar importers, who receives a gross salary of £272,672 a year, one can calculate that the effects of the Budget changes in higher rates and thresholds must have been that he got a staggering rise of no less than £1,155 *a week*, or an extra £60,000 a year.

The broad effects of Tory income redistribution over the last six months are set out in the table appended here. The effects of combining the tax gratuities in the Budget with the higher mortgage payments (net of tax relief, since this is what is actually paid) have led to a net loss for everybody earning below around £15,000 a year. Net losses range from nearly £1 a week for the low-paid worker at about two-thirds the national average wage (i.e. about £60 a week) to nearly £3 a week for technical supervisory or lower management personnel. Only at nearly four times national average earnings are net gains still being registered, post Budget and mortgage increases, of about £3 per week. Thereafter not even soaring mortgage costs can obliterate the massive Budget tax giveaways, and the senior manager on £25,000 a year is still registering a net gain of some £53 a week.

The VAT increase effects take this trend further still. The three changes combined – Budget, mortgages and VAT – now leave the low-paid worker nearly £2.50 a week worse off, the average-paid worker £4 worse off, the supervisory/lower management grade £7 worse off, the middle management/professional grade £3.50 worse off, and even the higher management level £6 a week worse off. Only those earning more than £20,000 a year have gained, and they number precisely 1 per cent of all taxpayers. In Tory Britain 99 per cent of the population have therefore had to take a loss. Against this, however, the cosseting of the richest 1 per cent has been almost proverbial. Even after the unprecedented VAT and mortgage cost increases, the *average* member of the highest-paid 1 per cent of earners is still left with a gain of £40 a week, an *increase* equal to well over half the national average wage net of tax. So all households from £3,000 to £10,000 a year are now about 4 per cent worse off as a result of the main Government financial changes since May. By comparison, the £25,000 a year family is now some 8 per cent better off (or some 15 per cent better off net of tax, *in terms of disposable income*, which is what counts).

Even this, of course, excludes higher bus and rail fares, increased prescription charges, big rent and rate increases, as well as major cuts in public and social services, all of which tend to hit the poorest hardest. Equally the calculations exclude the effects of the Budget's raising the threshold for the investment income surcharge, which exclusively benefits those well endowed with substantial unearned income.

Gains and losses from June 1979 Budget and the latest 3¼% rise in mortgage interest rates

(All figures are £ per year)

gross earnings (£)	gain from Budget (£)	assuming mortgage of (£)	effects of increase in net annual mortgage repayments (£)	net gain/loss from Budget plus mortgage increase (£)	effects of VAT increase to 15% (£)	total gain/loss (£)	Total % gain/loss (i.e. total gain/loss as % of original gross income) (%)
3,000	+95	7,000	−138	−43	−78	−121	−4.0
5,000	+165	12,000	−236	−71	−135	−206	−4.1
8,000	+252	20,000	−393	−141	−220	−361	−4.5
10,000	+380	25,000	−480	−100	−280	−380	−3.8
17,000	+952	42,000	−800	+152	−450	−298	−1.8
25,000	+3,850	62,000	−1,200	+2,650	−620	+2,030	+8.1

Sources: gains from Budget: Treasury, Hansard, 21 November 1979
effects of mortgage interest increase: Building Society figures released 23 November.
effects of VAT increase: updated from the 1977 Family Expenditure Survey.

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IRAN
Fred Halliday

Why have the people of Tabriz taken so long to voice their dissent?

Revolt of the largest minority

ONE OF THE MOST CURIOUS features of the uprising in Iran's second largest city, Tabriz, is why it has taken so long to occur. Capital of Azerbaijan, Tabriz was the first city in which major anti-Shah riots broke out in 1978, and in 1945-6 it was the site of a Soviet republic. Although the latter could not have been set up without the support of the Russian troops then in Iran, with their British allies, there is no doubt that the demand for autonomy raised at that time had overwhelming popular support from the Azerbaijani Turks, who are the largest non-Persian minority in Iran. In the years of the Shah's dictatorship there was considerable unrest among Azerbaijani intellectuals at the cultural domination of Persians, who all too often scorned them as *Khar*, or donkeys.

Despite the autonomy demands recently raised by the Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis and Turcomans, the Azerbaijanis appeared in recent months not to share these aspirations. One reason is that in contrast with the other minorities the Azerbaijanis are Shia Muslims like Khomeini, and hence shared the belief that they would benefit from a Shia Islamic Republic. Another reason is certainly that Ayatollah Sharriat-Madari, the spiritual leader of the Azerbaijanis, does not believe that senior divines should play a major political role: he disapproved of Khomeini's activism, but was not willing himself to take the initiative in opposing it.

Beyond sharing a common brand of Islam, the Azerbaijanis are much more socially integrated with the rest of Iran than are the other minorities. They make up a considerable part of the Tehran bazaar population, and a number of Azerbaijani families have been closely linked to the Tehran state. Ex-Premier Nehdi Bazargan, who held office under Khomeini for several months, is himself from Tabriz. In addition, the Azerbaijanis probably bear more resentment towards the Kurds, their partners in ethnic subordination, than they do towards the dominant Persians. A group of Azerbaijani students I met in Iran in the summer remarked that, while they liked the idea of regional autonomy, they could do without it — 'because if we get it then the Kurds will have to get it too'.

A key figure in the Azerbaijani movement is Sharriat-Madari's lay supporter, Rahmatalleh Moqaddam-Maraghei. He was originally elected to the Iranian Parliament in the 1960 elections — the last free ones held under the Shah – and was an outspoken critic of the monarch at that time. In 1947 he founded the Radical Party, a small liberal grouping linked to the older National Front, and after the overthrow of the Shah, he was for a brief time governor of Tabriz. But Moquaddam-Maraghei resigned in protest at Khomeini's failure to take the question of the ethnic minorities seriously. He was especially angered at the way in which the Islamic Guards, young Persian desperados recruited in Tehran, were being deployed in Tabriz and used to quell opposition.

The long reticence of the Azerbaijanis now appears to be over, provoked by the Islamic Constitution that Khomeini has imposed on Iran and by an armed attack on Sharriat-Madari's home on 5 December. But despite its popular support, the Azerbaijani movement has neither the organisation nor the physical terrain to resist the centre in the ways that are open to the Kurds.

Other minorities have received some support from the left, but the Azerbaijanis have been denounced by the Tudeh Party, the communist organisation, and by the radical Islamic Mojahidin. Repeating Khomeini's words, they claim that the Tabriz movement is the result of an 'American conspiracy' to divide the Iranian revolution. They stress that Sharriat-Madari only reluctantly supported the anti-Shah movement and that he favours a more pro-western orientation for Iran than Khomeini. Leaving aside the spurious claims about conspiracy, one can certainly doubt whether the kind of instantaneous economic and political self-reliance envisaged by Khomeini's left-wing supporters is any solution for Iran. And even if Sharriat-Madari is no revolutionary there can be little justification for the left opposing what are, in themselves, legitimate Azerbaijani demands. If anyone is dividing the Iranian people now it is not Jimmy Carter but Ayatollah Khomeini who, invoking some mystical Islamic unity, seems intent on refusing to accept the pressures that are building up for regional autonomy.

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A Fabian at the end of his tether

THE BELLIGERENT LOOKING GENT at the bus stop, on the train, in the bar makes some obnoxious remark about Africans, trade union militants or the link between the crime rate and socialism. Do you give battle for the sake of the bystanders? If the gent in question wears a three piece suit, carries a stick and is doing a passable imitation of Evelyn Waugh in his later years, then the line of least resistance might seem attractive.

From May 1975 Paul Johnson unloosed a series of extraordinarily vicious attacks, first on the trade unions and the Labour Party, and then on an ever widening range of targets from the ecology movement to modern art, from the philosophy of Herbert Marcuse to the Notting Hill Gate carnival. Johnson identified the Left as responsible for an insidious assault on civilisation, paradoxically combining chaos and collectivism; his recommended solutions, no less paradoxically, combined re-affirmation of the individual with calls for a stern restoration of law and order. Johnson's central preoccupation has been, and remains, the sinister totalitarian threat represented by organised labour. Johnson soon established himself as by far the most authoritative interpreter of the Left so far as the Tory press was concerned: articles that first appeared in this journal were reprinted in their entirety by the *Daily Mail* or the *Telegraph*. The readers of these papers were insistently reminded that Johnson was a former editor of the NEW STATESMAN, an intimate of leading Labour politicians, and someone who had been 'one of the Labour Party's most brilliant and influential crusaders'. If a man with these credentials declared that the Labour Party had become a Marxist-fascist Party, then surely he must know what he is talking about?

The impression created by Johnson's confident harangues can scarcely have been dented by the few, isolated attempts to rebut them. Too often those who responded to Johnson would preface their remarks by tributes to him as a 'master of polemic' whose sallies were 'adventurous, learned and deeply funny', or would nervously concede: 'There is much in the detail of Johnson's argument with which it is difficult to disagree.' But this obligatory politeness had no effect on the recipient, unless it was to encourage him to further outrages. Clearly in the matter of Paul Johnson the Left had special responsibilities which it did not discharge. If his polemics are, in fact, vilely abusive, his learning shallow, and his details frequently false or deranged, then this must be pointed out without equivocation. Otherwise we become, in effect, silent accomplices of the master polemicist.

Here are some representative samples of the Johnson polemical technique:

> It is astonishing that the British Labour movement, whose original aim was to civilise industrial society, should repudiate this tradition, turn again to the dark past and harbour the thugs. Nor will the men of violence be content with the mere patronage of Labour. They are on the march. Violence feeds on its triumphs over the law. Labour's leaders may think the beastliness of a picket line is acceptable. But violence is an evil continuum which begins with inflammatory verbal pursuit of the class war, continues with Grunwick and the lawless use of union power ... and then – as we may well fear – rapidly accelerates into full-blooded terrorism, with firearms, explosives and an utter contempt for human life. This is where the Labour Party is heading. It has already embraced corporatism, which ultimately must mean the end of parliamentary democracy. But corporatism *plus* violence is infinitely worse. It is fascism; Leftwing fascism maybe, Marxist-fascism if you like, but still fascism all the same. ('Farewell to the Labour Party,' NS 9 September 1977.)

Indeed Johnson was so pre-occupied by the fascism of the Labour movement that he entirely discounted the ominous activities of the National Front in 1977-8. The establishment of the Anti-Nazi League brought out Johnson's visceral hostility to Left-wing anti-racism. He chose the *News of the World* for the following comment on 12 March 1978:

> Most sensible people in this country are not unduly disturbed by the activities of the National Front. Some Labour Party propagandists are trying, for their own political purposes, to present the Front as a potential Hitlerian menace – unless we all join in an anti-racist crusade to oppose it ... Much more serious in my view is the anti-democratic threat posed by the Extreme Left ... The great problem this country faces is not race, but crime – and especially violent crime ... many senior policeman feel they are fighting a losing battle, and that the forces of disorder are gradually gaining the upper hand. It is against this background that the Extreme Left flourishes ... At one level the assault is generalised: judges, like policemen, are presented as the administrators of a biased, capitalist legal system, heavily weighted in favour of the bourgeoisie. But at another, and more dangerous, level there are violent verbal attacks on particular judges over particular decisions ... Unfortunately the habit of criticising judges on political grounds is by no means confined to the Extreme Left. Members of the present Cabinet have been known to do it ... Radical dons preach that judges are essentially political figures, and that in many cases there is no obligation to obey the law. Herein lies the real strength and danger of the Extreme Left ... Membership is no bar to academic or civil service promotion, or to access to the media.

The bullying tone, the toboggan slide from one real or supposed fact to another, the construction of an identikit Public Enemy, the invitation to red-baiting, are all hall-marks of the Johnson polemic. But perhaps the chief selling point in Johnsonian bombast is his talent for the flashy phrase, the slogan that neatly abbreviates reflection: 'violence is an evil continuum', 'Leftwing fascism' and so forth. When Johnson takes up a case every resource of calculated and colourful hyperbole will be exploited to distract the critical faculties and induce acceptance of Johnson's terms of debate. The reader may feel that Johnson goes too far but the striking pattern he imposes on a diverse, or even unrelated, set of facts leaves an enduring after-image. Johnson likes large subjects and has no hesitation in making large pronouncements upon them. This type of punditry is typically conducted from such a lofty vantage point that it can dispense with the hard-earned techniques of the reporter or the researcher. But though much expense is thereby saved, a heavy toll is taken by the pundit's *deformation professionnelle*, a failure to distinguish between the reality of one's hopes and fears and that of the outside world.

THE STRIKING EFFECTS of Johnson's prose are achieved by the repeated invocation of a few key terms which are never themselves explained or investigated. One such term is 'violence' and its derivatives. So far as Johnson is concerned violence does not consist in physical assaults upon the person, but simply in words or behaviour of which he disapproves. From the passages quoted above it is already clear that he sees little difference between violent words and violent acts. Violence is not that which produces, or tends to produce, actual bodily harm but rather violations of what Johnson regards as right and proper: the laws of the state and the laws of the market. In Johnson's imagination violence is a disembodied fury menacing all order and civilisation. He never troubles to situate it socially within the modern world, with its harsh inequalities and lip-service to freedom and justice. The fetishised abstraction of violence in Johnson's denuncations is simply the inverse of its claimed authenticity and expressiveness in the writings of those, like Fanon and Sorel, who celebrate it. Used in this fashion, the word is designed to arouse emotion while subduing reason.

For Johnson the main purveyors of violence, in his chosen sense, are terrorists, demonstrators, pickets, and the left-wing press. Thus Johnson shares the terrorist delusions that terrorism is something other than an utterly puny and insignificant phenomenon when compared with the concentrated means of violence at the disposal of the modern state. Johnson is content that President Suharto, who climbed to power over the bodies of half a million Indonesians and who is responsible for the holocaust in East Timor, should be an honoured guest of the Queen and Margaret Thatcher. On the other hand he will condemn

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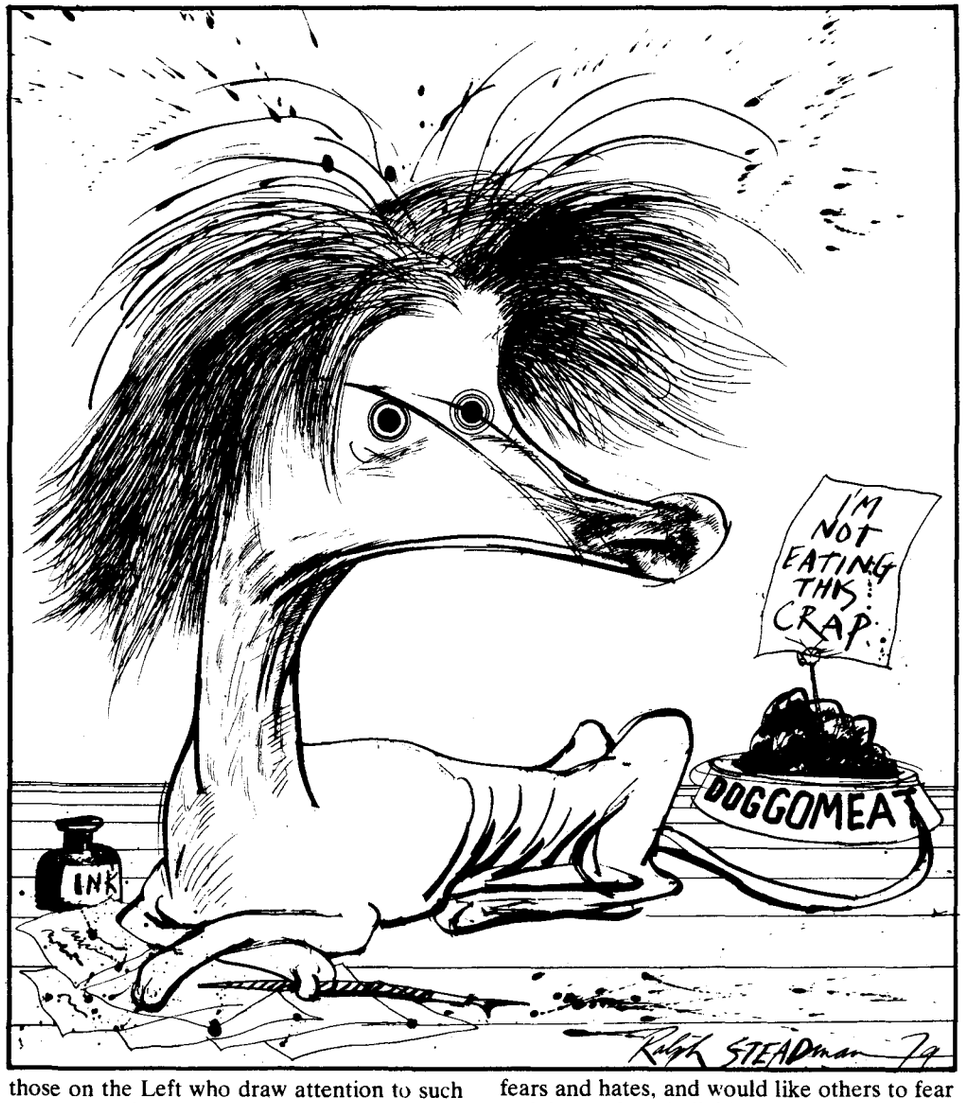

those on the Left who draw attention to such unwelcome facts:

> The papers (of the far left) abound with stories of murder and massacre of workers abroad, of police violence at home; they are as it were political horror comics . . . Attention is constantly drawn to papers published by other, related causes such as homosexuality, women's lib, black power; one such, called *Flame*, is said to be "burning now". (NS 11 February 1977.)

His sensibility offended by the violent language of the Left, Johnson is now prepared to use the debauched and sadistic publications of Rupert Murdoch to launch his campaigns against that motley alliance of trade unionists, left-wing thugs, homosexuals, women and blacks, who threaten civilisation as we know it. These people are recklessly smeared with the charge of terrorism and violence as a means of distracting attention from the true sources of wretchedness and tyranny in the modern world, especially the West. Johnson's definition of violence is nicely calculated to stimulate and titillate the jaded palate of the readers of the yellow press but to render literally invisible the victims of poverty, avoidable disease, starvation, aerial bombardment, torture, or racialism.

According to Johnson, 'it is a fact that collectivism and violence always go together.' For this reason Johnson has no difficulty in concluding that: 'With its doctrine of class-warfare, and its anti-individualist cult of violence, the new Labour Left is . . . strongly corporatist and directly related to the main body of Marxist-fascist ideology.' (NS 11 February 1977.) If violence represents all that Johnson fears and hates, and would like others to fear and hate, then individualism is the recommended antidote. Johnson does not see that, once the sense of human community is lost, then the individuals who count will be a constantly narrowing circle. Johnson's discovery of individualism is the occasion for stealthy self-congratulation: 'I have come to appreciate, for the first time in my life, the overwhelming strength of my own attachment to the individual spirit.' For Johnson the individual is almost entirely antithetical to the collective. Indeed it is because the individual is single, spare and isolated that he or she requires the protection of an external agency: the spiritual protection supplied by the Church, the physical protection supplied by the state. The idea of 'an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' (Marx) is incomprehensible to Johnson. For Johnson every man is an island, entire unto himself, who would be diminished or threatened by being joined to the main. In his book *The Offshore Islanders* Johnson quotes Donne's famous lines: 'For every man alone thinks that he hath got/To be a Phoenix, and that then can be/None of that kind of which he is but he.' But Johnson, the would-be Phoenix, truncates the quotation in mid-line, at that word (p. 205).

Johnson's plea for the individual would be more impressive if he made any effort to identify the forces which currently menace civic freedoms: but his unremitting tirades focus monotonously on trade unions with never a mention of the ways in which the new powers of the police, the secretive bureaucracy of the civil service, the concentrated ownership of the media or the vast power of the multi-nationals trespass upon the freedom of individuals. Johnson claims that his philosophy of individualism is drawn from the writings of Hobbes and Locke. In fact their 'possessive individualist' doctrines embodied only a highly restricted series of individual rights and freedoms, available, if at all, only to the propertied classes. While Hobbes endowed the monarch with absolutist powers, Locke was prepared to condone, and profit from, the slave trade. Yet if their theories did contain insight, this would certainly include the notion that rights should not be divorced from economic power and responsibility. In the modern world economic forces are far more social and co-operative in nature than in the time of Hobbes and Locke; unless these forces are socially and co-operatively controlled the extension of political rights to the mass of the population is pathetically inadequate and incomplete. Johnson proclaims the virtues of Hobbesian and Lockean individualism without ever considering the successive attempts that have been made to transcend its narrow framework, from the writers of the Scottish historical school to the magisterial opening chapters of Talcott Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action*. Although Johnson once called himself a socialist, he also ignores the socialist critique of individualism to be found in Marx and William Morris, C. B. MacPherson and Herbert Marcuse.

JOHNSON SOUGHT, in *Enemies of Society* (1977), to supply a philosophical foundation to the alarmist turn of his political interventions. The book largely consists of hit-and-run attacks on a series of peripheral or second-rate thinkers whom Johnson regards as responsible for the most dangerous trends in the modern world. Johnson's selection of targets (Teilhard de Chardin, Ivan Illich, Marshall McLuhan, etc) seems to have been largely determined by the fashions of yesteryear. Marcuse is awarded a few pages on the basis of the publicity he received at the time of the student revolt. Quite apart from the fact that Marcuse's best writings are unmentioned, the portentous gravity of his Marcuse-critique is undermined by a failure accurately to render the concepts employed in the works he is attacking – thus Marcuse's notion of 'repressive tolerance' is referred to as 'oppressive permissiveness'. Though Johnson is worried by the growth of Marxism in Britain, he does not refer to the products of the Anglo-Marxism which have developed in the 60s and 70s. Johnson is a historian yet he chooses not to comment on Hobsbawm, Thompson, Raymond Williams or Perry Anderson.

The positive poles of reference in *Enemies of Society* are science, which must be *trusted*, truth, which must conform to Christian principles, and art, which must encourage the 'common certitudes', presumably lay versions of 'Christian truth' and fideistic science. Johnson's forays into science and the arts are not happy. The scientist whose achievements he seems to rate most highly is Eysenck, who is presented as the Galileo *de nos jours*. Otherwise Johnson seeks to confound the entire ecological critique by an appeal for confidence in scientists, as if scientists were not themselves divided over such questions.

Johnson feels that he has glimpsed the

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awful predicament of modern culture on his theatre-going expeditions to London's West End. The work of Pinter and Stoppard reflects the moral wasteland inhabited by the modern artist. Goya is commended as an artist with a much sounder grasp of the 'common certitudes'. His painting The Third of May 1808 is particularly praised on the grounds that 'It is quite clear what the painting portrays . . . We are not disorientated' (p.222). Johnson even claims that 'There is no doubt from the picture where Goya's sympathies lay . . .'. Johnson is, it seems, unaware that this painting has a companion, 'The Second of May 1808', in which the roles of victim and executioner are reversed, introducing a critical element of ambivalence. Both paintings were sufficiently disturbing of the 'common certitudes' of 19th century Spain – they portray the revolt of the Madrid *populacho* – to have been stowed away in the Prado reserves for 40 years.

Readers of this journal have recently been reminded of the central importance attributed by Johnson to Christian values and Christian truth. Johnson is an enthusiastic supporter of the new direction in which Pope John Paul II is taking the Church. He passionately believes that Christianity must nourish national, popular roots. He is filled with foreboding by the spread of secularism in our society, and especially within the ranks of the Labour movement. We will not consider the strictly religious aspect of Johnson's concern here but focus instead on his more relevant and interesting theses on British history. This will also throw some light, we hope, on the evolution of Johnson's own politics and on how he came to make the transition from being a reactionary radical to being a radical reactionary.

The chief ingredients of Johnson's philosophy have not changed much over the years, though their respective proportions certainly have. In a sincere tribute to the spirit of England-for-all Johnson attempts to synthesise in his own person the contending trends of the ruling class Britain of his youth. Up until about 1974 his reflexes and prejudices made up the following cocktail: three parts Fabian tonic water, one part Colonel Blimp's home brewed gin, a dash of French vermouth and a tincture of Chester-Bellocian bitters. According to report both Kingsley Martin – already prejudiced against Johnson's Catholicism – and Leonard Woolf thought this a weird and unstable concoction and insisted that his appointment as editor of the NEW STATESMAN in 1965 would remain provisional for a six-month trial period. Around 1974 the proportion of the various liquids was drastically changed with the Colonel's home-brew drowning the tonic water, and the French vermouth replaced by a toxic twist of monetarist lemon.

According to legend Johnson experienced a conversion to socialism when he saw a French policeman beat up a female student on one of the demonstrations against General Ridgeway in the 1950s. Johnson long entertained the conviction that the Gaullist state was fascist, a view that one might not unfairly describe as an early example of intellectual laziness and impressionism when confronted with the unfamiliar. In the 1950s Johnson was as ready to attack the British as the French state. In his first book *The Suez War* he vividly denounced that adventure as a possibly fatal blow to the British political system, placing it on a path 'marked with ministerial lies and corruption, with deceit and evasion in high places, with increasing public cynicism, with ever-failing faith in democratic institutions'. The British state was in any case 'faulty, illogical and archaic'; Suez had destroyed the public confidence which alone lent it authority and stirred up 'hidden depths of race hatred and violence.' But even at this period Johnson's indictment was garnished with loyal declarations and patriotic conceit. The worst aspect of the affair was that it could no longer be said that 'the world's moral centre of gravity was in Westminster'. For Johnson Suez was not the death rattle of British colonialism but a break with 'a century of British foreign policy in which the maintenance of the balance of power and the rights of individual nations had been our principal concerns' (p.143).

Johnson's most ample statement of England's national destiny came with the publication of *The Offshore Islanders*, published in 1972, two years after he left the editorship of the NEW STATESMAN. Of his various books it is the most revealing, since he cares much more for English history than for philosophical or theological disputation.

The Tories . . . are atrophied Englishmen, lacking certain moral and intellectual reflexes.

Paul Johnson, NEW STATESMAN, 1958

Johnson's history of England is suffused by a besotted love of country and an eager identification with the great men and women who best express 'English genius'. The English first showed their sturdy taste for independence when they threw off the Roman yoke in the fifth century. In the eighth century the man we know as the Venerable Bede distilled the essence of Englishness in his Yorkshire monastery and this precious heritage has been handed virtually intact to succeeding generations. Central to that heritage was Bede's 'deep, if gentle and unassertive, strain of patriotism and racial pride.' Johnson, whose full name is Paul Bede Johnson, writes that the English Saint was the author of 'perhaps the most remarkable work of the entire Dark Ages; in some ways . . . a finer piece of scientific history than anything produced in the ancient world'. The purpose of this inflated claim is to add greater force to Bede's most notable political discovery: 'Bede understood that the strength of Old English society rested on the ability of church and state to work together in closest harmony . . . And of course Bede was right. England was the first society to create a strong and civilised central authority on a permanent basis; it lies at the root of such felicity as this country has enjoyed throughout its history' (p.39).

In Johnson's view the unique virtues of Old English society – 'a fortunate marriage between geography and race' – persist down to the most recent times and largely explain why the English became the 'chosen race' leading humanity out of the darkness and misery of the pre-capitalist era. One could describe Johnson's style of historiography as 1066 and all that, but this would be somewhat paradoxical since the Norman Conquest itself is entirely subsumed in a chapter entitled: 'Unity, Stability, Continuity (600-1154)'. For Johnson the decisive figures in English history are those who have contributed to strengthening and perfecting the 'strong and civilised central authority' and who have understood the need for a judicious balance of temporal and spiritual power. Among them are King Alfred, William I, Queen Elizabeth I, Cromwell, William Pitt the Younger and Gladstone. The villains in Johnson's story are usually alien interlopers, such as that Scottish King James I, who flaunted his homosexuality, or the Puritans who were an 'alien import' who not only 'believed in a doctrinaire religion imposed by force' but also 'oozed hypocrisy'. 'Fortunately Elizabeth was quite capable of dealing with such men . . . She killed only four of them: but a good number were gaoled, and on the whole she held the movement in check' (p. 162). It is with a barely suppressed sob that Johnson records the passing of Elizabeth: 'When she said she loved the people of England – and they are not a people whom anyone can easily love – she meant it' (p.176).

This, and many another maudlin passage, inspire the thought that the book might better have been called *This England*. Yet there is a radical theme running through the work, a late flowering of one type of Fabian radicalism. Johnson favours all those reforms which enable England to retain the place that is rightfully hers, as the most advanced and civilised nation on earth. The introduction of needed reforms requires not popular turbulence but the dedication of an enlightened elite. Johnson salutes the revolution of 1640 as a great moment of national regeneration. The Putney debates are praised for embracing 'every major political concept known to us today . . . through five continents . . .' (p.171-2). The despised Puritans are denied any significant role whatever in this achievement.

The concluding sections of *The Offshore Islanders* suggested that England had again drifted into the sort of impasse she faced in the early 17th century. The integrity of her institutions was threatened from within by the heterodox ideas of the student revolt and from without by the imposition of a new alien yoke, that of the Treaty of Rome. During the long years of empire the English wasted their substance on adventures in foreign lands instead of cultivating their own genius. Continuity and stability were purchased at too high a price, the price of chronic institutional stagnation and national decline. All the country's best energies were suffocated by an intense corporate spirit. The army, the City, the civil service, the trade unions, the universities, even Parliament itself, were organised along the lines of a private club, with an attendant mass of restrictive practices, corporate privileges and secretive procedures for making and carrying out decisions. 'Thus the true reformer will appear in the guise of Henry II, breaking down the castles and stockades of the private franchises; or like Edward I, he will ask, *Quo Warranto*, by what warrant, right or authority any group claims and exercises privileges above the common folk. . . .The levelling of institutional inequalities is the key to the gospel of improvement' (p.424-5). In an earlier passage Johnson has made it clear that Parliament itself is not exempt from this egalitarian imperative: 'Parliament is the custodian not so much of liberty as of the existing distribution of property' (p.213).

IT MIGHT SEEM that Johnson, given his radical aim of national regeneration, should

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rather have looked to some new popular movement than to a reforming monarch. But at no point does Johnson display sympathy for unruly behaviour on the part of the 'common folk'. Given the ugly sectarian bigotry of English crowds from Titus Oates to Lord George Gordon this is understandable. But Johnson's distrust of the populace is so pervasive that it leads him to misconstrue some major episodes of popular unrest. Johnson complains that such reformers as Jeremy Bentham ran into stiff popular opposition when they proposed measures of penal reform, and that it was only in government circles that they were well received. Johnson omits to point out that Bentham, possessed of a strongly individualist psychology, was advocating a prison system in which all prisoners would be subjected to months, if necessary years, of total isolation, and would be incarcerated in cells that could be inspected from a central point at any time. Prisoners were to wear masks to prevent them from making signs to one another during the exercise period and were only to be permitted to speak to the chaplain. The first attempts to construct prisons along the lines of a 'Panopticon' were (as shown in Michael Ignatieff's remarkable study *A Just Measure of Pain*) intensely unpopular and their more extreme features were eventually modified in consequence.

If the 'common folk' cannot better themselves, to whom is the task to be entrusted? At this point there are echoes of Beatrice Webb's 'elite of unassuming experts'. According to Johnson national redemption must be sought through 'an elite, classless because drawn from all classes, providing, in Gladstone's words, "a natural leadership, based on free assent".' In an earlier gloss on what Gladstone meant by 'natural leadership' Johnson explained: 'Englishmen born to wealth and privileges have a special duty to society, to supply the defects of a mass-democracy which arise from the political consequences of inequalities which no human wisdom can finally eliminate' (p. 314).

At the time he completed *The Offshore Islanders* which, despite its entirely mythopoeic approach to its subject, remains his most substantial attempt to explain his ideas to date, Johnson was still unclear about the true path to national salvation. But it is clear that he had already identified the necessity for soliciting a vital contribution from those 'born to wealth and privileges'. By 1972 Johnson was a Fabian at the end of his tether. The events of 1974 snapped his emotional ties to the Labour movement, preparing the way for the extraordinary exercises in union-baiting of 1975. Insurgent miners, revolting students, lawless Labour councillors at Clay Cross and elsewhere, seemed like a nightmare to the man who wanted radical change within a context of reinforced law and order. In 1970 Johnson voted Labour, so he informed NS readers, because 'the solid ranks of Labour men and women (in the House of Commons) sitting behind their ministers' were 'an absolute and cast iron defence against adventurism'. (NS 19 June 1970.) By 1975 Labour offered no such cast-iron guarantee.

In the Fabian tradition there was always a profound ambivalence. On the one hand there was a genuine interest in socialist theory, a preparedness to undertake painstaking research, an eventual decision to throw in their lot with the Labour movement rather than the ruling class. But at the same time there was about them an invincible insularity and philistinism that rendered them incapable of learning anything from the great debates among continental social democrats; a fear that the sub-human Moorlocks might emerge from the lower depths and threaten civilisation; and a longing for respectability that led to the most abject accommodation to the local political Establishment. Fabian socialism was too often simply a collectivist version of Bentham's utilitarianism. With Johnson the elitist and nationalist component of Fabianism, which had always been considerable, broke free and found more suitable moorings in the Tory party. Fabian elitism only really made sense so long as the activists in the Labour movement were resigned to a thoroughly subordinate and impotent role. With the 'revolt on the shop floor', flying mass pickets, conferences of the TGWU at which the General Secretary could lose the vote, demands for re-selection of MPs, all this changed. The Fabian elitist had then to decide either to attempt to put the genie back in the bottle, like the Labour 'moderates', or to depart, like Johnson. This is not to say that the Fabian tradition is wholly negative. It is interesting to recall that even such an irreconcilable foe of the bourgeois order as Trotsky advised British Marxists to organise themselves openly, along Fabian lines, to carry their message within the British Labour movement instead of standing apart in doctrinaire isolation or burrowing away as entrist moles frightened of the daylight. This is even better advice today, as Labour is shaking off Fabian tutelage and the Paul Johnsons are at last consummating their frustrated love affair with Britain's 'natural leaders'.

Margaret Thatcher ... has bountiful reserves of Churchillian valour.

Paul Johnson, the *Sun*, 1978

AS WE SAW at the beginning, Johnson's overriding obsession is with the power of the trade unions. He never pauses to reflect that the trade union movement itself is sustained by the dedication of a great multitude of *individuals*, and that it represents a decisive proportion of those who create social wealth while themselves struggling to exist, and to feed their families, on considerably less than a take home pay of £100 a week. Trade unions seek, but do not usually obtain, some control over hiring and firing, and over conditions of work. For Paul Johnson this is colossal impertinence and a menacing threat to the rights of the individual. The vastly larger powers of those who own and control industry, or run the public corporations, are entirely natural, right and proper so far as Johnson is concerned. Thousands can be sacked or declared redundant, whole regions or industries condemned to decay, vital natural resources laid waste for commercial profit, all without Johnson noticing any infringement on individual liberty. Socialists scarcely need to be informed that there can be unlovely aspects to trade union power: trade union officialdom can be timid toward employers and arrogant to the membership, trade union militants can meanly pursue a sectional interest. But the power of general secretaries or shop stewards, which ultimately derives only from their members, is certainly different in kind from the utterly arbitrary and secretive power wielded by the directors of large companies and the heads of the civil service. Moreover, Johnson's assault on the narrow selfishness of trade unions would carry more conviction if he did not reserve his most virulent prose for those socialists who seek to introduce within them a more ample vision of social co-operation and workers' control. Whatever the failings of British trade unionism today they are less pronounced than in the days of Bevin or Carron, for which Johnson is nostalgic.

In January 1974 Johnson wrote an article in the *Evening News* advising Heath to throw in the towel and calling on the miners to come to England's rescue. This seems to have been his last gesture in favour of organised labour; on all the evidence it seems to have been prompted more by a feeling that might was apt to be right than by any conviction of the justice of the miners' claim. Henceforth he saw national salvation wholly in terms of destroying, not releasing, the potential of the organised producers. In his view a draconian new labour law was needed because 'powerful men who conspire together to squeeze the community are gangsters'. (*Evening Standard*, May 1975.) So that Paul Johnson can sleep safely at nights the whole of society must be turned into a vast 'Panopticon', with no communication or association permitted unless it meets with the approval of 'senior police officers'. To give us all a sense of purpose, an intolerant and insular sense of Englishness must be promoted which denies all that is most positive in our national history: the mingling or coexistence of the most diverse cultural strains, the making of the English working class, the cosmopolitan legacy of a country that was both the centre of empire and a place of refuge for the heterodox and persecuted.

It would be easy, employing a familiar Johnsonian trope, to portray him as Benito Johnson, the journalistic prophet of a national socialist England. Yet this would be to misunderstand the project of Johnson and of his new patrons. There is not a trace of anti-capitalist demagogy in Johnson's current polemics: given the weakness of genuine socialist anti-capitalism in this country, if compared with Italy or Germany after the First World War, one could say that demagogic anti-capitalism is quite unnecessary to defenders of the established order. The ideological problem today is to kindle some positive enthusiasm for capitalism while persuading the mass of people to forgo the consumer goods, and social services, which have in the past compensated the labouring population for the tyranny and emptiness of a life spent as an appendage of someone else's machine. Capitalism today desperately needs romance and poetry; British capitalism further needs a propagandist who can plausibly represent the levelling of social conquests and popular liberties as a crusade of national regeneration. These are the roles that Johnson now attempts to fulfil. He would like to see Margaret Thatcher assume the mantle of Good Queen Bess, defy the continental powers, shoot a few puritans, outlaw their congregations, and encourage the natural leaders of the island race to restore England's glory.

Robin Blackburn

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CIVIL LIBERTY
Jason Ditton

Scotland's Criminal Justice Bill could herald similar measures elsewhere

Police malpractice to be legalised

IT HAD BEGUN as a nice peaceful march, a small protest against government cuts. It was small because most people were too scared to protest – and they were right.

Duncan McLean (not a real name) had started off on the march, but the bitter cold drove him into a friend's house to warm his hands, numbed from holding a placard. That was where the police found him. Under the new laws, McLean then suddenly stopped being a citizen, and started being a 'detainee'. His placard became an 'offensive weapon'. His friend (the police refused to release even her name) was forcibly detained as a witness.

There wasn't room for them anywhere else, so they were locked up in isolation in one of the new Detention Centres. Neither of them was allowed to notify, let alone consult, a solicitor or anybody else: the police said it was 'necessary in the interests of justice'. They didn't have enough evidence to arrest. So McLean and his co-conspirator (that's what she'd become) were interrogated for the whole of the statutory six hours.

A solicitor was brought to the Detention Centre by other marchers. On the solicitor's insistence, both the 'conspirators' were released after six hours. But the police kept their clothes, their fingerprints, and some fragments of dirt taken from under McLean's toenails in the course of a routine body search. And as soon as the two Detainees stepped outside the Centre, they were immediately re-detained. This time the police said that they were trying to gather evidence for conspiracy to commit some other offence. Because the solicitor was there, they had to say which offence. They said Conspiracy to Commit an Act of Vandalism. There was nothing the solicitor could do.

IT COULD BE South Africa. But in fact, it is Scotland. And, if the government can rustle up the Parliamentary time to speed the appropriate legislation through, Scotland by Christmas this year. The story was constructed entirely from the lengthy official reports whose collected recommendations will be the cornerstone of the new government's improved Criminal Justice Bill (Scotland). Its passage is unlikely to be stormy. The Bill has traditional law-and-order appeal, the backing of a comfortable government majority, and probably only mock opposition from the Labour Party whose own very similar Scottish Bill fell with their government. It is widely expected that if Scotland's 'experiment' works, similar measures will be introduced in England and Wales.

At the heart of the proposed legislation lie three very fundamental changes in the existing relationship between the police and the public. First, there will be a new wide-ranging police power to detain and interrogate people not only without arresting them, but also when the police do not possess sufficient evidence to arrest. Vanishing here are archaic rights to remain silent, or to notify or consult a solicitor or a relative while in police custody. Out as well, by a neat side-step, are existing legal rights to any redress for wrongful arrest.

All this is officially presented as mere legitimisation of 'technical irregularities'. The Thompson Report, from which the Bill is distilled, actually says:

Peter Kennard

> At worst such legalisation of police practices as we propose will place the articulate and knowledgeable citizen in the same position as that presently occupied by the ignorant and inarticulate citizen. As people become increasingly aware of their rights the present tacit co-operation which makes it possible for the police to function may not continue and the police may find themselves in a position to do only what they are specifically authorised to do by law.[1]

Second, potential witnesses can also become 'detainees' – and that's an official word for them – for as long as the police deem to be 'necessary'. Third, the police will be granted extended powers to stop and search anybody for offensive weapons. The police already possess adequate powers to stop and search people for guns under the 1968 Firearms Act, or for any other offensive weapons under the 1953 Prevention of Crime Act. Powers like those proposed in the Bill could be used by a future government to control political activities of which it disapproved.

Demands for the usual steps of consultation and Green Papers have been neatly avoided. Malcolm Rifkind, Minister of State for Home Affairs at the Scottish Office, has said (*Scotsman*, 8 October) that 'there has been enough public discussion on the issues' already (ie. over Labour's Bill), and that the proposals 'should be passed into law as soon as possible'. Another Scottish Office spokesman, meanwhile, says it is 'a bit premature' to go into arguments against the Bill, as it has not yet been published. And Rifkind has himself claimed that the Conservative Bill will be 'more ambitious' than its predecessor. These 'more ambitious' proposals are no doubt culled from Tory ex-MP Teddy Taylor's Scottish Conservative Party handbook, *Crime and its Remedies* – a punchy hang-'em-and-flog-'em pamphlet, in that style of populist authoritarianism which kept Taylor at Westminster for several years. But in May, for the first time, Taylor's law-and-order platform was decisively rejected by his Glasgow constituents. The new Labour MP, John Maxton, supports the Campaign to Stop the Scottish Criminal Justice Bill[2].

A CENTRAL SUPPORT for the original, and no doubt the eventual, Bill was the rising Scottish crime wave. Statistics are a perfidious support at the best of times. And now, any justification they might have provided for this legislation has completely disappeared with the publication of the most recent official Scottish Criminal Statistics. These show a significant *fall* in all the really worrying areas of crime. Murder dropped by a third, from 61 cases in 1977 to just 41 last year. Theft fell by 26,791 cases, and Malicious Damage went down by 4 per cent. Malcolm Rifkind, and even a spokesman for the Police Federation, see their success here as a 'fluke', but this interpretation is certainly challengeable given the increased clear-up rate for all offences (up from 57 per cent to 61 per cent last year) which the police have achieved. And we should see further improvements in the clear-up rate when this year's figures are released – since the police manpower shortage has been reduced from 763 at the end of 1978 to a mere 253 under strength this month.

1 Thompson, Second Report, *Criminal Procedure in Scotland*, Cmnd. 6218, para. 3.11.

2 Campaign To Stop the Criminal Justice Bill,58, Broughton Street, Edinburgh.

Refugees? What refugees?

A FORTNIGHT AGO Carlos Reyes, a 36-year-old Chilean journalist, arrived at Heathrow airport. He had been expelled from Chile to Panama in 1976, after two years as a political prisoner; on 23 November this year he was sent back to Chile for reasons which remain unclear (although it is believed that he had offended the Panamanian authorities with an article he had written). When he reached Chile he was promptly returned to Panama, whereupon the Panamanians expelled him again. At this point he boarded a plane to London and asked permission to stay here as a political refugee. Showing the hospitality for which we've become famous, British officials slapped him in Harmondsworth detention centre, where he remained for a week until pressure from MPs and others secured his release.

Britain's behaviour towards Carlos Reyes is consistent with the government's new policy towards Latin American refugees, and with the new thuggish image of William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary. Whitelaw has just informed the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Latin America (JWG), which represents central government's only contribution to the resettlement of Latin American refugees, that its grant for the next quarter has been cut by a third and that the grant will be stopped altogether by the end of the next financial year.

This news had been feared ever since Whitelaw's announcement on 29 October that the special programme for Latin American refugees was to be ended. With astonishing nerve, he tried to give the Tories credit for the scheme while simultaneously axing it:

> The programme, which was introduced by the Conservative government in 1973 following events in Chile, has resulted in the admission of over 3,000 refugees.

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What are the facts? On 28 November 1973 debates on Chile and the world refugee problem took place in both Houses. Speaking for the government in the Lords, Lord Windlesham said that

> We do not think the situation is one which would justify specifying a particular quota . . .

No mention of a special programme there. Even more striking is a speech made in the Commons, on the same day, by Julian Amery. It must be remembered that this is not Julian Amery, wild man of the back benches, but an earlier incarnation – Rt Hon. Julian Amery, minister of state at the Foreign Office and spokesman for Her Majesty's government:

> The motion asks us to provide refuge for Chileans who seek it. No visas are required for Chileans to visit this country, but settlement in this country is severely restricted. At a time when we are excluding a number of Commonwealth citizens and when we have undertaken the obligation to accept free movement of labour within the European Community, I do not think that we could undertake to give priority to Chileans who wish to come and settle here.

Whitelaw apparently interprets this as meaning 'Her Majesty's Government are delighted to announce the introduction of a special programme for Chilean refugees.'

The truth, of course, is that Amery's speech represents the traditional keep-'em-out attitude – an attitude which Whitelaw himself has now adopted. No amount of rewriting of history can change the fact that nothing which could conceivably be called a 'programme' for Chilean refugees operated before the Labour government's arrival in 1974.

The reason given by Whitelaw for his decision to end the special programme is that 'the number of applicants and people admitted under the programme has dwindled over the past year and other pressing demands on our capacity to absorb refugees have grown.' The decline in the number of refugees *admitted* under the scheme is an absurd reason to give: it is, after all, Britain which decides whether or not to accept refugees, and the number of those admitted has been falling largely because we have been employing much harsher criteria when taking those decisions.

An important test of refugees' acceptability is whether they have 'ties' with this country. The last government's policy was that refugees who had, for example, been adopted or sponsored by individuals or organisations over here would be considered to have sufficient 'ties'. This is no longer the case: in the past few months several refugees who were adopted by British organisations have been refused admission. Moreover, since May a disturbing number have been turned down on the ground that they don't speak English.

As for the reduction in the number of *applicants* over the past year, again this is a reflection of Britain's bureaucratic nasty-mindedness rather than a demonstration that refugees are less eager to escape. Refugees who apply to come to Britain have to wait between six months and a year for a reply. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Brazil has said that it is reluctant to submit applications to the British Embassy because of the enormous delays.

In short, Whitelaw's attempts to justify his decision on numerical grounds are phoney. The true reasons are political. Remember the pressure that was required before Thatcher gracelessly agreed to accept a few boat people? If the Tories are that reluctant to accept refugees from a Moscow-aligned Communist government it doesn't take much imagination to see that they will be extremely unwilling to take defectors from regimes – such as those of Chile and Argentina – of which they are rather fond. Two representatives of the Argentine government, who were in London at the time, welcomed Whitelaw's statement of 29 October: it would help 'normalise' relations between their country and Britain. Refugees are the most visible sign of human rights violations and with matters of this sort – whether Pinochet or Pol Pot – the Tories prefer to preserve a blind eye.

Francis Wheen

ECONOMIC MONITOR

Edited by David Blackaby

Blacks' position worsens

DOUBTS HAVE recently been cast upon the interpretation of findings that since 1972 US black/white wage differentials have completely disappeared, as this trend has been coupled with an increased inequality of on-the-job training. Comparisons of the period 1966-69 with 1972-74 reveal that, unobserved, the difference between white and non-white job-experienced-induced rates of wage growth has more than trebled. In other words, non-whites who were hired into skilled jobs have failed to be promoted or obtain higher paying jobs elsewhere at the same pace as their white counterparts. Thus, in future, non-whites' age-earning paths are likely to diverge *more* from whites' paths than in the past.

The narrowing of black-white wage differentials is illusory, E. Lazear, *The American Economic Review*, September 1979.

Why are women badly paid?

EASTERN European countries have not been more successful in raising women's earnings relative to men's than Western capitalist countries, a recent study finds. Modern radical economists attribute the subordinate status of women in the marketplace to several capitalistic institutions. The nuclear family and the relentless drive for male supremacy within the family have forced women into specialised roles of child-rearing and family maintenance, depriving them of the opportunity for wealth accumulation – the principal source of status and power in capitalism. This segregation of women into non-market work creates a labour reserve which can be cheaply tapped during labour shortages. The new study examines women's earnings over the past two decades when they have approximated 65-70 per cent of men's earnings in Finland, Norway, Israel, France, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland (69.3 per cent in USSR in 1965). In predominantly English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, UK and USA) women's earnings have averaged less than 60 per cent of men's. A tentative explanation is the common law tradition (as opposed to civil codes) in the latter group, with systems of property rights and doctrines of coverture which discourages the acquisition of human and non-human capital by women.

Do Women earn less under capitalism? J. R. Moroney, *Economic Journal*, September 1979.

Tackling unemployment

WHAT SORT of policy for unemployment should Britain have? A recent article argues that the need for regional policy has lessened as the regional differences are now less accentuated than they were in the thirties. Today an individual's prospects in the labour market depend as much on his occupational group and his age as upon the area in which he lives. Between 1966 and 1973 the main development was the shift in employment away from manual workers, whose number fell from 10.2 million to 8.9 million. This has been reflected in a substantial rise in long-duration unemployment (over 26 weeks) among manual workers. And while total unemployment has doubled over the period, long duration unemployment among adult men, aged 25 to 50, has quadrupled. At the moment our training efforts are not sufficiently directed towards these problems.

Structuralism and structural unemployment, N. Bosanquet, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, November 1979.

How multinationals behave

THE GROWTH and dominance of the subsidiaries of transnational corporations (TNCs) relative to locally owned firms is generally explained in terms of the former's technological superiority and more efficient use of resources. But a new study suggests that in practice the dominance can be explained by the tactics used by the TNCs as a group against locally-owned firms. These tactics prevent or obstruct entry of local capital into the industry. For example, in the Brazilian electrical industry there are widespread interlocking directorships across the subsidiaries of the TNCs. This naturally facilitates cooperation rather than competition between these firms: the eight largest electrical TNCs in Brazil have organised themselves into a cartel. There is also evidence of 'mutual forbearance' whereby each subsidiary concentrates on a particular product line, leaving others to its rivals, so that within each product line there is little competition between TNCs. There is also evidence of cross-subsidisation, with profits from other lines or locations being used to keep prices below those which the small, mainly local, competitors can sustain. TNCs also use their financial strength to control the supply of raw materials and components. Unable to compete with the TNCs on equal terms, the local firms are steadily being taken over by the TNCs. (M. Yamin)

Oligopolistic tactics to control markets and the growth of Transnational Corporations in Brazil's electrical system, Richard Newfarmer, *Journal of Development Studies*, April 1979.

The Sayings of Père Patriarche

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EDUCATION
Rick Rogers

Tory plans are being railroaded through local committees

Building the selective ghettos – fast

A COMMON THREAD runs through all the attempts by Tory-controlled local education authorities (LEAs) to bring back the 11-plus and stem the tide of comprehensive schooling: a lack of public consultation. There are three main Tory strategies: moving from a selective system to a super-selective one, with high ability pupils from both inside and outside the LEA being herded into the grammar schools (Bromley, Kingston); planning more selective schools (Bolton, North Yorkshire); switching comprehensives back to grammar or secondary modern schools (Bexley, Cumbria, Birmingham).

Kingston – the only LEA with no comprehensives at all, having fought off the compulsion to reorganise under the 1976 Education Act – has opted for a super-selective scheme. Originally, they had promised comprehensive schools by 1982, hoping for the change of government which they now have. The original comprehensive plan included merging a boys' secondary modern with a girls' grammar. This has now been dropped – despite being the plan most favoured by local parents. Now the boys' school will merge with another secondary modern, staying as a secondary modern. A meagre £21,000 will be spent on new resources – for girls' toilets. But two single-sex grammar schools (the Tiffins) will have almost £¾ million pumped into them.

Kingston aims to halve the proportion of local children who go to grammar schools to 7½ per cent – the remaining places will go to high-ability pupils from neighbouring LEAs: Sutton, Richmond, Merton and Surrey. Meanwhile, starved of resources and having to struggle with the declining school population, the remaining secondary moderns will have to combine forces to create sixth forms; many people fear that in some subjects there will not be sufficient students to do this.

Support for the Kingston scheme has been dropping away, even among anti-comprehensive parents who view with horror the idea of high-ability children going into secondary moderns. But it is going ahead anyway, even though there has been little local consultation – and none with the neighbouring LEAs. (Under the new Education Bill, they would be forced to pay up for any pupils enticed across the LEA boundary into Kingston's high-ability ghetto.)

Bromley LEA's plans to introduce super-selective grammars have run into trouble with parents, teachers and the Tory group on the council. Bromley has broken its agreement with the teachers to consult them over changes by cancelling consultation meetings. The teachers' unions have withdrawn from the project and are planning a massive lobby against the plan. School-based parents' meetings have been almost unanimously opposed to the council's plan and the Tories only decided to go ahead after the chairman of the Tory group used his casting vote. There will now be a 3-line whip for the crucial mid-December council meeting when the final decision is to be made.

BOLTON LEA IS also in deep trouble with the teachers. It had been under an order by the Labour education minister to implement comprehensive reorganisation in September this year. But following the election it brought in an emergency 11-plus scheme and set about developing grammar and secondary modern schools. The local NUT has stopped Bolton in its tracks by taking the council to court for breaking the consultation provisions of their collective disputes procedure.

Two LEAs have so far firmly proposed turning comprehensives back into selective schools. Birmingham is reversing the status of Sutton Coldfield's girls' school; Bexley that of Erith school. In Erith's place, there will be 4-form entry grammar school for 11 to 18 year olds and an 8-form entry secondary modern for 11 to 16s, offering no GCE courses at all. Bexley's consultation process amounted to little more than sending leaflets detailing the scheme to local secondary and primary schools with instructions to hand them to the children to take home to their parents. Few leaflets survived the journey. That scheme may be faulted legally on the grounds that too little time has been allowed between the publication of the proposals and the date for the start of the new scheme.

Cumbria *may* plug two Whitehaven comprehensives back into the selective process. But the recent county-wide public outcry when the LEA proposed a new selection scheme has brought a reconsideration.

The fourth Tory strategy is smash-and-grab. In Ealing, the Tory council (which has just given us Newlands school – NS 2 November) has agreed to sell a successfully operating comprehensive school (Twyford) to the London Diocesan Board of Education. The Board intends to turn it into a Church of England voluntary-aided school. Entry will be based on 'membership' of the C of E, or any other Christian denomination. That would exclude 30 per cent of the local population: Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, and West Indians. It would also enable more white pupils to be bussed in from outside the borough on the C of E tag. The ambiguity of C of E membership would allow the school to select its intake on the basis of ability as much as on religion. Moreover, as a new voluntary-aided school, the Board would get 85 per cent of the purchase price of Twyford school from the Government – over £1.5 million.

Once again the consultation procedure has been condemned as too little and too devious. A canvas of parents in 1977 by the local church authorities reported a high level of demand for a C of E school and this was used to justify the council's decision. But the local parent/teacher action group and the Ethnic Relations Unit of the SSRC have exposed the survey as being unscientific and unreliable (as the council knew all along) and completely misrepresenting the wishes of the parents in the area.

There are also allegations that public meetings have been rigged (by long speeches and evasive answers to a limited number of questions) to prevent a full discussion of views opposed to the sale of the school. The council's education chairman, Lady Henniker-Heaton, has admitted that consultation is only going on 'because it is a statutory requirement' and that the meetings would not influence the council's decision.

Provisional official figures for 1979 show there are now only 162,993 children (4.2 per cent of all secondary pupils) in 253 grammar schools spread across 49 LEAs. More to the point, some 330,000 children are still condemned to attend secondary modern schools – one child in 12; with many more in comprehensives blighted by having pupils creamed off by nearby grammar schools. However, paradoxically, the proportion of children in grammars is likely to decline further (if more slowly) while those in secondary moderns is likely to increase: first, there is super-selection; second, more secondary moderns are being planned than grammars; third, some LEAs, including Tory ones, are going ahead with comprehensive schemes; fourth, some grammars and old direct grant schools may decide to go independent.

ROOF
Shelter's housing magazine

As housing moves back into the front line of political confrontation and social priority *Roof* is essential reading for those who want to keep informed on the issues. In the current number:

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First test case on sex discrimination

THE FIRST CASE about sex discrimination in schools has come to court this week – without the help of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). A Surrey schoolgirl, Helen Whitfield, is suing (through her mother) the London Borough of Croydon and the governors and former head of the Woodcote high school in Coulsdon, for alleged discrimination over craft subject courses.

Woodcote is a mixed school for 11 to 14 year olds. (At 14, the pupils go on to one of the two Purley high schools on a single-sex basis.) At Woodcote, boys take a 3-year design technology foundation course (metalwork, technical drawing and woodwork); girls a 3-year home economics and needlework course.

Helen Whitfield started at Woodcote in November 1976. She applied for a design technology place and was refused. Following pressure from her mother, the school eventually relented (one year later and only because

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a boy had dropped out of the course). But Helen turned down the offer – she would be the only girl in a large group of boys and was being treated as a special case.

The school explains that it did not offer the design technology course to girls because they would be unable to continue with those subjects up to CSE or GCE level once they went on to the Purley high school. It also claims that its resources (staff, equipment, accommodation and funding) made it impractical to cater for both boys and girls on all craft subjects available in the school. The Whitfields maintain that the original refusal was a clear contravention of the Sex Discrimination Act – and that the subsequent offer also treated her 'less favourably' than a boy because she was being expected to opt in to a course as a girl whereas a boy automatically went on to the course.

According to the EOC's new handbook for schools, *Do you provide equal opportunities?*, a girl would be able to bring a complaint under Section 22 of the Sex Discrimination Act if she found that:

> benefits, facilities and services . . . were either not available to her because she was a girl (e.g. admission to a particular course or class which had hitherto been mainly or even exclusively reserved for boys) or that they were made available to her in a less favourable way, because she was a girl (e.g. by having to make special application to join the class or group).

Ironically, the EOC backed out of the case last year, withdrawing funds and refusing to give any reason for doing so. (The Whitfields are now relying on legal aid to see the case through.) The EOC's change of heart may have had more to do with its own internal politics than the case itself (NS 1 December 1989) and the Whitfields are applying for a judicial review to establish whether the EDC is misusing its powers by withdrawing support from litigation involving a minor.

Ray Moore & Martin Upham

Why the big steel union has lost faith with BSC

British Steel's 'dreadful programme'

FOR THE FIRST time since 1926 there is to be a national steel strike. With the British Steel Corporation expected to lose £300 million this year and intending to get rid of 52,000 of the 150,000 jobs in the industry, why has the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, one of Britain's most placid unions, chosen this inauspicious moment to stand and fight? Ostensibly the strike is over BSC's wage offer of two per cent, coupled with a further 10 per cent productivity deal. The ISTC regard the productivity deal as BSC's way of further cutting jobs – a policy to which the union is increasingly opposed. The major explanation for the strike is that until now the union has believed the BSC management when they have said that their strategy involved a limited number of redundancies. They believe them no longer.

In the last two years BSC has withdrawn from steelmaking in seven significant areas, some like East Moors in Cardiff, of considerable size. Corby, Shotton and the electric arc works in Cleveland will make ten. In 1978/79 BSC shed almost 16,000 jobs. Works with a successful record like Bilston Special Steels have been shut in order to concentrate steelmaking in a few plants. BSC's justification is simple. Capacity stands at 21.5m. tonnes; Demand for BSC steel at home and abroad is slipping to 15 million tonnes a year; in 1975 it was predicted that capacity would reach 36 million tonnes by 1982 and 38m. by 1985. But if the steel recession is a worldwide phenomenon, BSC's response to it is peculiarly British, crystallising much that is wrong with British management. The steelworkers are striking because they have rumbled the BSC management.

Sir Charles Villiers, chairman of BSC, originally hit on the farcical objective of breaking even by the end of this financial year. After the half yearly results it was quietly dropped with murmurs about how the 'target had at least concentrated the mind'. But Sir Keith Joseph has now said that he will give only £450m. for 1980/81 and that all this sum will be taken up in investment and redundancy money. None of this government money is provided to deal with operating losses. So the break-even target remains, only put back a year. Quite why BSC should attach such importance to break-even in the short term is unclear since sustained profit making would seem a more sensible target.

BSC's firm goal is to cut capacity in line with demand. In an attempt to balance the books ideas being canvassed at a recent board meeting included the total closure of the £500m. investment on Teesside whose centrepiece, the 14 metre Redcar blast furnace, was lit just seven weeks ago. BSC held back from that option when they made their announcement on Tuesday about a further 30,000 redundancies by next August and probably concentrated their plans instead on turning Llanwern into just a finishing plant and Port Talbot into just a crude steel producer with its rolling mill closed. The Scunthorpe plant is reduced in size and 10,000 jobs throughout BSC are to be lost through unspecified productivity savings. If the present plan follows its logical course it is conceivable that in the mid-eighties, BSC will be making steel in bulk in just three places. BSC thesis is that since it has low cost steelmaking facilities available, its financial performance will be optimised if it can load them as heavily as possible. This, it argues, means closing small, older works. However, it also wished to do this in the early seventies when it was aiming at a capacity more than double that now envisaged. After a series of closures including those announced on Tuesday there still seem to be no comforting prospects for any of the five large plants – Ravenscraig, Redcar, Llanwern, Port Talbot and Scunthorpe.

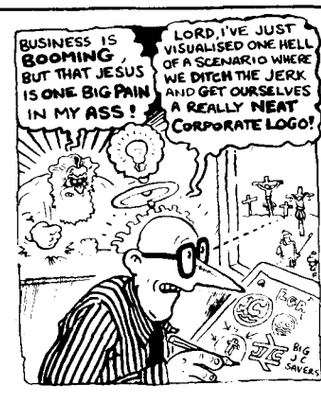
BSC may now be over-optimistic about what they can produce in the few plants they will be left with and also over-pessimistic about how much steel they can sell both at home and abroad. Such a combination could encourage the Corporation's spiraling decline.

EEC figures indicate that UK capacity utilisation rates for steelmaking are the highest among member countries. In 1977 our percentage rate of utilisation of steel production potential was 70.9; most European countries were in the region of 50-60 per cent. Academics at Warwick University, arguing against the closure of Corby, showed that BSC will be unable to meet even present demands if closures take place. Trade union representatives repeatedly encountered evasions when asking questions of BSC about its true realisable capacity for making steel.

BSC counters by saying that BSC's market will continue to contract: 'We are chasing the home market downwards.' The main reason for the contraction, BSC points out, is the failure of the principal steel consuming sectors of British industry – the motor cycle, car and shipbuilding industries. All of these had a high propensity to buy from BSC; their failure is a serious blow. Between 1973 and 1978 there was a sharp fall in total deliveries to the UK market – by 4.3m. tonnes to 15.5m. tonnes. Imported tonnage, the fashionable pointer for BSC under-production, has risen by only 750,000 tonnes in the same period. BSC argues that it is the total fall in demand and not BSC's share of the market which is the problem.

THERE IS MORE than a whiff of fatalism about the BSC's talk about demand. At Corby and Shotton the unions frequently encountered references to the difficulty of exporting. Yet it is well known that steel tubing, the Corby product, is governed in the market place by a cartel of major international producers. Similar market arrangements exist for other products such as tinplate. BSC is not prepared to confront these. Indeed figures presented to the unions during the Corby exercise indicate that BSC is withdrawing from most export markets because they are money losers.

The same pessimism pervades BSC's attitude to the home market. ISTC argued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through a Ruskin College paper recently that BSC had reached a favourable moment to sell aggressively. Its low cost plants were on stream and the end of exchange controls should begin to see a reduction in the value of the pound, making imports more expensive. Yet the Corporation still sees declining trends.

Much is made of the impact of third world producers on the international market; in fact the tonnages they export to Britain are insignificant. Of course, these countries may compete with British steel in the home markets of other countries, but their steel is often for home consumption. Furthermore, these newly industrialised nations are themselves an export market for a producer not irretrievably stuck in the slough of despond.

BSC's strategy, besides retrenchment, appears to favour high prices and the maximisation of profit per tonne. BSC argues that its prices were so low up to 1975 that £750m. of revenue was forfeit. Since then prices have risen and BSC says it is prepared to lose market share through high prices if it thereby increases its revenue. The difficulty is that BSC may now be at an unfavourable base from which to raise prices still further. Surveys indicate that price is now the crucial factor in consumers' buying abroad. High total revenue obtained by increasing prices would represent only a short term gain. In the long-term, the gap between capacity and demand would widen.

There is a danger that BSC will identify a certain level of demand as being that which it can profitably meet, and then savage its plant configuration into a shape that will correspond. But the market is not passive. Though the extent of direct steel import penetration of the UK market must be kept in perspective, imports have around a fifth of the British market – a smaller slice than many EEC countries but one which is more likely to increase than fall.

BSC's other competitors, the private steel producers, come in two categories. Bulk steelmakers have stood firm and raised their home market share. The smaller firms with a narrow product range have pushed back and a rapid merger process has now set in. Unemployment caused by BSC has been so vast that the shedding of 7,000 jobs by these small firms has passed almost unnoticed outside the Sheffield area. Thus BSC has entrenched to the benefit of an expansion of imports and stability in parts of the private sector.

More recently the expansion of private steelmaking capacity has taken place precisely in BSC's weakest areas. BSC's share of the home market is being pushed back in key areas by products derived from steel made by independent firms on the cheap, capital intensive, electric arc route. More than a third of UK steel is now made by this method. At the time of nationalisation in 1967 less than a seventh came that way.

So far a major share of private output has gone abroad, but increased cartelisation may lead to producers feeding back into the home market.

FINANCIALLY, the results of this policy have been disastrous: BSC has lost money ever since the end of 1974/75. By next March it will have have accumulated losses of about £1,400 million and consumed over £3,000 million of government money. The situation has not been made easier by the way in which the Corporation is financed.

Table 1: Falling demand for UK steel

	Production tonnes in thousands	
	1973	1978
Industrial plant & steelwork	989.3	612.3
Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering	500.5	211.4
Motor Vehicle Manufacturing	1753.8	1069.6
Wire & Wire Manufacturers	1263.4	798.5
Construction	1028.6	423.4

Source: ISSB Annual Statistics 1978

In the five years to the end of March next year BSC, over the period as a whole, will have broken even at the pre-interest, pre-depreciation level. In other words – putting the most flattering interpretation on the figures – the Corporation will have been able to cover all its labour and other running costs. The snag is that it needed vast amounts of money to finance new investment and increases in working capital, and had to pay the interest charges on just over £1 billion of existing debts. Without big increases in turnover and/or cuts in operating costs, losses were inevitable. And with the heavy borrowing that these and the investment programme entailed, interest charges were likely to mount.

Although the government has put up a large proportion of its new capital in the form of dividend capital – on which it receives no interest or dividend until BSC becomes profitable – the Corporation has still had to borrow around £1,000 million. As a result, today two-thirds of BSC's pre-tax losses are accounted for by interest charges.

Although a different financial structure would not have made up for BSC's incapacity to sell its steel, it would have been a help. There may well be arguments, for example, for keeping highly unprofitable parts of BSC open for a fairly long time on social grounds while the restructuring of the industry takes place and alternative jobs are created. There may be arguments for providing all the capital for new developments interest free until they begin to earn revenue. The Tories, of course, leapt at the opportunity to take Villiers at his word, though some Tory backbenchers – particularly those in steel constituencies – now seem worried. The implications of sticking to the policy are deplorable. BSC chief executive Scholey says that every plant in the Corporation, performing at standard cost, can be financially viable. But government forecasts all point to a fall in output. One such report (unpublished) predicts a decline in output of more than 20 per cent in metal-using industry by the early eighties. Strict adherence to the policy could mean the end of several large steel works, whose very existence is the reason given for closing down so many successful smaller ones.

The 1967 nationalisation was motivated partly by a recognition that the private sector was not able to support investment on a scale that would lead to adequate steelmaking capacity being laid down. By a stroke of luck the private sector has been able in the seventies to take advantage of the low capital cost advantages of electric arc steelmaking and continuous casting. The opportunity to rebuild an entire industry, let alone one on the scale of steel, comes rarely. The question is

Table 2: Import penetration of EEC countries' home markets

	1976%
West Germany	30
France	41
Italy	24
Netherlands	94
Belgium/Luxembourg	71
Eire	91
Denmark	81
United Kingdom	20

Source: ISSWP Progress Report 1979

whether or not this has been the right kind of investment. Even now only 11 per cent of BSC's steel output is continuously cast; a ratio which compares poorly with 37 per cent in West Germany or Italy's 42 per cent. And the latest closure proposals seem to indicate a further step away from electric arc steelmaking which may leave BSC with this route only in the alloy steelmaking plants of South Yorkshire. This puts BSC at a considerable disadvantage because continuous casting eliminates the costly ingot process and the electric arc system provides greater flexibility for small producers.

BSC'S PRODUCTIVITY APPEARS to be much lower than that of its major competitors: it takes 10·9 hours to produce a tonne of crude steel in Britain – four and a half hours longer than in France, which is next in the productivity league. However, since these comparisons are open to a number of objections (of scope and definition) the National Economic Development Office has recently compared two UK plants directly with ones in Holland and Sweden.

This revealed that manning levels in BSC's Scunthorpe plant were lower in production than in Holland but higher in maintenance. However, Scunthorpe's steel-making plant was much bigger than its iron-making plant could justify and, as a result, productivity was much poorer than in Holland. Dutch labour costs were twice as high as Scunthorpe's, but Britain's labour costs per tonne were lower. Productivity at BSC's Clydebridge plate mill was lower or higher than that of a Swedish competitor, depending on whether it was measured by tonnage or by the number of plates produced. Generally, there was less job demarcation in the continental plants but this mirrored a regime in which all employees were treated the same, carried a lot of responsibility and were closely involved in their work.

The problem of BSC's productivity is, thus, a more complete matter than its critics imagine, especially as three major continental competitors are losing money on a grand scale (others have heavily subsidised coal industries) and do not expect to break even this year. Between 1975-6 and 1978-9, while 25,000 BSC jobs were lost, productivity increased substantially – though it is still lower than 1973 and has risen more slowly than on the continent. Without at least the promise of alternative employment, steel workers are unlikely to listen to arguments that they are responsible for BSC's current mess.

Martin Upham is a researcher at the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. Ray Moore works at Ruskin College, Oxford.

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London Diary

☐ What strange contradictions environmentalism can produce. I hear that some eminent Men of Kent are banding together in criticism of the CEGB's plan to deface the landscape of Sellindge (near Ashford) with a converter station for a new 2-gigawatt link to France, intended to top up our electricity supply in time of need. With its associated pylons and other frippery, this will menace all that lovers of the countryside hold dear.

Three participants in the Battle of Sellindge are, I think, new to environmental protest. Lord Aldington, deputy-chairman of GEC, is better known for his desire to erect nuclear reactors up and down the country. Sir Fred Atkinson, as chief economic adviser to the Treasury, bears some responsibility for all the dubious forecasting which assists the case for over-investment in over-sized electrical equipment. And they are joined by Bill Deedes, the genial editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, whose columns encompass many denunciations of environmental protestors (especially anti-nuclear ones) who are well-known to be Moscow-inspired hooligans.

Traditionally, sinners coming to repentance are especially welcome. Regular readers of the NS, however, may wonder whether this is an example of the workings of the 'London-Bath Ellipse' – within which the Ashford district probably falls. (This brief rule of British political geometry says that all the less attractive aspects of industrial society are to be kept outside an ellipse whose foci are placed at London and Bath.)

☐ To continue the nuclear vein: what have power-stations to do with wine-drinking? Let me give an example. Sainsbury's – which represents, as it were, the human face of capitalism – market a red wine called *Côte de Tricastin*, which seems to be a real effort to give the customers value for money. It comes from a region where Electricité de France – perhaps they were not opposed by anyone with the puissance of Bill Deedes – have constructed a pressurised-water (PWR) reactor of the type now being urged on us. Like its companion stations throughout France, it has been assembled with numerous cracks in situ: the possibility that some French department will eventually rival Harrisburg for notoriety being airily dismissed. Tricastin 1 has not yet started operating, for even its builders admit that the cracks are still a mite excessive. When it does, I think Sainsbury's might be well advised to move their buying elsewhere.

☐ I hope the Left won't get into a tangle over the Bill of Rights issue. It is reasonable to suspect any libertarian gifts borne in the maniac hands of Lord Hailsham. But in spite of that, we need constitutional defences for liberty in a period when the authoritarianism of the Right becomes almost daily more insolent.

Our constitutional debate has been enfeebled by the Official Left's sentimentality about the 'sovereignty of Parliament'. Constitutional thought runs against placing sovereign power anywhere except in the hands of the people – and qualifying its exercise, if truth be told, even then. Because of this enfeeblement, we have no native blueprints to go on, and it therefore makes sense to import the European Convention of Human Rights. I have some experience of its workings: I don't think those of us who wanted to tell the story of thalidomide while it remained contentious would have been able to do so had we not been able to appeal to the Convention over the head of the English law.

But if adopted, how is it to be safeguarded? It must be protected against Parliament, for an assembly capable of revoking the Kenyan Asians' passports, or passing the Terrorism Act in a spasm of abject panic, will erase any Bill of Rights whenever the party managers find it expedient. (Look up the division-lists for those dismal episodes if you doubt me: the existence of a few brave spirits merely illuminated more plainly the behaviour of the Westminster rabble.)

Many Tories will argue that the Convention should be protected by an 'entrenched majority' of the Commons. This is no advance. The true method – however complex in detail – is to ensure that any deadlock between (say) Parliament and the judiciary must go to referendum. Sometimes we may feel, on the Left, that an ill-informed electorate has chosen unhappily. But the people themselves must defend their liberties as best they can, and it is a deadly error on the Left to imagine that any wise and specialist group can do this duty better.

☐ Bishop Ambrose Reeves, formerly – to the great discomfort of the South African regime – of Johannesburg had his 80th birthday on Monday. In course of the celebrations Edward Carpenter, the Dean of Westminster, cited one truly wondrous document.

The context was Carpenter's explaining the significance of Reeves' career: that he was the first really senior Anglican to be wholly unequivocal about apartheid. The stance is not easy now, but in the fifties it was apt to be greeted with incredulity. Letters poured into Lambeth Palace from distinguished Anglicans of the Rand: Canterbury's latest appointment, they said, had got it entirely wrong. 'Do you today', said Carpenter, 'recognise this description, from one of these letters, of Johannesburg's condition?' In it, Reeves was accused of

> sowing the seeds of discord and dissensions where peace, harmony and gracious co-operation had previously prevailed for many years.

If there is a 'saving remnant' in the Anglican Church, Ambrose Reeves personally must constitute a very large part of it. Yet it did not seem to me that the birthday messages from his fellow Churchmen rang throughout with joyous praise. One, I recall, expressed gratitude for the magnificent quality 'of his witness in Liverpool': rather as though one were to suggest that Keynes' main achievement was the *Treatise on Probability*.

☐ About this time last year, I was experimenting with Scotch whisky – not just in the seasonal way, but making some attempt to find out through chemical analysis just how much (or little) malt whisky goes into the blended Scotch we're offered across the counter. The results marked a further stage in the decline of a drink which was once individual and unique into a characterless, industrialised hooch. (Nice to be able to record, at least, that Teacher's claim to use more malt than most was not inaccurate.)

Some NS readers felt it wasn't proper for a Left-wing paper to dabble in whisky: I respect (indeed was born into) the temperance Left, but cannot share its view. Most of us feel the need for, and pleasure in, a drink. And it's important that the capitalists shouldn't swindle us over the transaction.

Further, the decline of Scotch is an interesting case study in the operation of untrammelled market forces – the French, of course, have been much better at protecting their brandy from commercial denaturing.

Scotch is an important export commodity, which will not long survive if the 'market' is left to define its quality. I am glad to see that the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) has realised this, and published an excellent report on the noxious practice of allowing bulk malt whisky to be exported. This goes to flavour Japanese grain spirit which – hokum apart – differs not at all from the industrial product which our own mighty distillers use to make blended whisky. (The only difference is that the Japanese are probably more efficient.) I wonder if the French allow bulk cognac to be shipped out for the manufacture of Japanese versions of Courvoisier and Martell?

☐ Outrage at the *Economist* over Peter Jay is not just about his money ($100,000 for a fraction of a year's work). What really gets up people's noses is that it makes nonsense of the tradition of anonymity under which they all laboured for so many years. Nominally Jay represents the Economist Intelligence Unit in America, not the paper itself – a distinction not visible to the average Dallas executive. One must admire the skill with which Peter has made successive British institutions – the Civil Service, *The Times*, the Foreign Service – into the stepping stones of his personal ascent. Only the Monarchy remains. How will he set about it?

Bruce Page

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ The council had spent two hours discussing a report on prostitution prepared by the city's chief executive, Mr David Scouller. This stated: 'Prostitution would be allowed outside residential areas subject to proper controls. It could be the responsibility of the local authority to ascertain demand, identify sites, and make up any shortfall not provided by private enterprise.' – *Guardian* (Margaret Hinton)

☐ Dr Sandford-Hill had been a city councillor in Cardiff and stood as an unofficial Tory in the 1970 election. The disciplinary committee was told he was 'a menace and a pathological liar' and that he was 'well on his way to becoming Lord Mayor of Cardiff.' – *Guardian* (Tony Gorton)

☐ The Monty Python film *Life of Brian* will not be seen in Harrogate because the council's film selection sub-committee has banned it without seeing it. The committee took its decision largely on information contained in a 'very factual' statement from the Festival of Light. The Festival admitted in the statement that it had not seen the film either. – *Guardian* (Keith Norman)

☐ The Who recently lent its name to a fashion company that has brought out an expensive line of mod clothes. Accused of 'selling out', The Who's John Entwhistle bristles: 'I reject that idea. This stuff is for the King's Road trendies who want to pretend they are mods.' — *Newsweek* (Alasdair Buchan)

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

On Trotsky

From Robert Wistrich

Alex Callinicos's review of a number of recent books on Trotsky (NS 16 November) is balanced and judicious, notably in its appraisal of the illusions of orthodox Trotskyism. But it seems to me mistaken in its assertion that Trotsky came 'to emphasise more and more the direct exercise of working-class power through organs such as Soviets as a crucial feature of any stable socialist regime'. Was the mature Trotsky really a champion of socialist democracy? Surely, the fundamental weakness of his whole position was his denial of socialist pluralism, the fact that he had very little to say on the crucial issues of human and civil rights even after the debacle of Stalinism. The fact is that Lenin and Trotsky destroyed revolutionary and working-class democracy in Russia at the same time as they extirpated the counter-revolution. Trotsky never went back beyond 1924 in his analyses of the 'Thermidorian' degeneration of the Russian Revolution, he condoned the abuses of the Cheka, the Kronstadt repression and the monopoly of the Bolshevik Central Committee because his commitment to socialist democracy was at best half-hearted.

His real tragedy, as I make clear in my newly published study *Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary* (Robson), was that in taking power he had to deny the insights of his youth, when he had been in conflict with Bolshevism. Pre-1917 'Trotskyism' had indeed been oriented to soviet democracy, but when Trotsky, following his defeat and exile, tried to reconcile it with Leninist teachings and the vanguard theory, he could no longer put the pieces together again. The paradox of Trotsky is that of a dissenter striving to prove that his 'heresy' is more orthodox than that of the Communist Church which excommunicated him. The twin prongs of modern Trotskyism (its neo-Leninism and its espousal of soviet democracy) are basically irreconcilable and reflect contradictions in Trotsky's own thinking which he never overcame.

Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire St., London W1

Travers traduced

From Charles Osborne

One must not misquote the masterpieces of English literature. The phrase associated with Robertson Hare in the Ben Travers farces is not (pace Benedict Nightingale, 30 November) 'Oh, misery me' but 'Oh, calamity'. Surely no-one who heard it uttered by Mr Hare can have forgotten? I agree, however, with Mr Nightingale's implication that Frank Dunlop does not understand how to produce English farce on the stage.

Arts Council, Literature Dept., 9 Long Acre, London WC2

Chess poems

From Andrew Waterman

I am preparing and editing an anthology entitled *The Poetry of Chess*, to be published by the Anvil Press. What I am principally collecting is good poetry in English of any period using chess and chess-concepts figuratively to define and express human themes. I am not including translations. A coverage of the not inconsiderable number of 'chessy' poems written since about 1945, and of American and Commonwealth material, has necessarily been piecemeal. Any help anyone can give with information in these areas will be gratefully received and acknowledged. I am looking for whole poems or substantial excerpts. Also, I should be happy to consider for inclusion any totally new poem any poet cares to submit before February 1980.

School of Humanities, New University of Ulster, Coleraine, N. Ireland

Purse strings

From Cllr Brian Powell

Lionel Morrison's ingenuous comments on Howard Sharron's article describing the tension existing between CRCs and the Commission for Racial Equality (NS 2 November) bear careful examination. Following criticism from Richard Shepherd MP on the annual report of John Mastrantone, Walsall's Community Relations Officer, in which the factual statement that Tory immigration policy was racialist was made, Mr Charles Boxer of the CRE wrote to me instructing me to come to London and reminding me that the CRE was responsible for the funding of the CRC and of the conditions made upon that funding.

In a second letter of 7 August, Mr Boxer, after commenting on 'much good work', etc., said 'we would wish to continue our financial support with as few difficulties as possible, *but* [our emphasis] I think you can understand that when some irresolvable differences of opinion arise my FLG committee members are naturally inclined to ask me to sort out the difficulties before approving support.' The letter ended with the remark that a meeting should be held as soon as possible since 'in these difficult times we have to make our financial decisions fairly rapidly'.

These letters were taken as threats by the Executive of the Walsall CRC especially as the first letter contained the untrue allegation that the opinions of our community relations officer were not representative of Walsall CRC as a whole. The 'contentious' report was in fact adopted by the annual general meeting with only two votes against.

This, combined with the unaccountable withholding of the agreed appointments of additional staff to Walsall CRC has caused understandable suspicion locally that the CRE is attempting to use financial leverage to undermine the independence of our Council.

112 Sandwell St, Walsall

Prison crisis

From Geoff Coggan, Meg Howarth, John Platts-Mills QC, Dick Pooley

What the May Inquiry into the UK Prison Services uncovered was the absurd wage structure and conditions of service of prison officers who can be required by the Prison Department to work up to 10 hours' overtime. Prison officers are not production workers – they work with people, not products. Their only bargaining counter in an 'industrial' dispute is the prisoners. They do not choose this to be so, but they *are* workers and, as the Director General of the Prison Department has himself said, 'You cannot expect prison officers to behave like industrial eunuchs' (*The Times*, 3 December).

It seems that not even the AUEW Executive member of the May Committee saw fit to explain to his Inquiry colleagues the consequence of a work situation in which 'overtime amounts to almost 60 per cent of basic pay, and average gross earnings are in excess of those for Assistant Governors (grade) 2' (May Report).

The Home Office, under Mr Callaghan's Home Secretary, never intended that the merits of the prison officers' claim be seriously considered by the May Inquiry, nor that the cause of the crisis in our country's prisons – the Home Office's own prison policy – be examined. On the contrary, May was set up, with Committee members of Home Office choosing, to buy time to save that policy. In the face of unprecedented action by officers, dissatisfied over pay and conditions of work, the Home Office found itself without an effective strike-breaking force.

Any doubts about this have now been dispelled. The training of army personnel to run 'prisons outside prisons' began in March. The May Inquiry was not due to report until October. Did any/all of its members know that army NCOs were learning how to run prison regimes while their Inquiry into the merits of the prison officers' claim was in its early stages? Clarification on this point from the Committee chairman, Mr Justice May, is necessary. The Committee's rejection of that claim – for a higher basic wage rate and a consequent reduction in overtime – only increases its urgency.

The crisis point in Britain's prisons has been reached. Home Office prison policy over the last 10 years, taken over and developed by successive Home Secretaries, is responsible. The present Home Secretary, Mr Whitelaw, inherited May and the army NCOs in training. It is Home Secretary Whitelaw who is responsible for the assault on Wormwood Scrubs D wing. Unless there is a change in Home Office policy, it is only a matter of time before the British 'Attica' about which prison governors themselves warned 12 months ago.

If that is to be avoided – and who cannot wish that it should be so? – immediate action is necessary: (1) a high basic wage for prison officers based on the industrial working week; (2) an immediate, and drastic, reduction in the size of the prison population; (3) the disbanding of the MUFTI squad, whose existence became known only when it went into action for the first time at Wormwood Scrubs on the night of 31 August.

These are but the essential steps which must be taken if the consequence of Britain's long-developing prison crisis – deaths of prison officers, as well as prisoners – is to be avoided. The largest prison population in Europe is angry over what happened on 31 August. Prison officers are angry at the rejection of their claim. The causes of the crisis still remain to be tackled – a judicial policy of increasingly long sentences (in which Britain also leads Europe) and a prison system which is inhuman and anti-social, brutal and brutalising, of both prison officers and prisoners. This is the responsibility of our Parliamentary penal reformers. Are they up to the task?

PROP, 21 Atwood Road, London W6

Crushing the invisible

From Frank Field MP

It would be easy to reply in kind to Lynda Chalker (Letters 7 December). As a one time liberal who built her reputation on promoting good causes, but who now ruthlessly plays her part in Thatcher's regime, she is a sitting target. But I will resist the temptation and answer the few points of substance in her letter.

The first concerns the extent of social security abuse. The main thrust of my article was to show how massive the existing checks were against abuse and yet the detected rate was still infinitesimal compared with the amount of money involved. The only figures we have are those issued by the Government and these were drawn from answers she gave me in the Commons. Instead of using the only data we have to reassure the public about the known extent of fraud and the whole battery of measures taken to combat it, Lynda Chalker tries to fire anxiety by using phrases about social security being 'a refuge for swindlers and scroungers'. By unleashing this kind of campaign she will make it less rather than more likely that people in need will claim benefit. Whatever the minister says, many people will think that the public will view them as scroungers just because they are drawing benefit.

Nor is it any use her playing the innuendo game by suggesting that as Stan Orme appointed more anti-fraud officers the Tories are right to increase their numbers by 1,000. Not everything Stan Orme did was right, although to his lasting credit he, more than most, got child benefits up to £4. Not high enough was what Lynda Chalker said before entering this Government. But we now get a different story.

Lynda Chalker's letter states that the 1,000 additional anti-fraud officers will save 'broadly £50 millions' of public funds. Of course I will expect Mrs Chalker 'to prove our figures', and I am sure she 'will welcome the challenge'. Furthermore, I would hope to gain an undertaking that if she is mistaken

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LETTERS

about these savings she will 'adapt our staffing policies accordingly'.

The phrases in quotes are from Lynda Chalker's first letter which she sent to the NEW STATESMAN, but mysteriously disappeared from the second draft which was hurriedly substituted. Likewise, I have challenged her in the Commons to publish the survey which she purports shows the effectiveness of interviews with unemployment benefit officers. I am still awaiting a reply.

House of Commons

Impatient ex-patient

From Alistair Ricketts

I am no better placed than most other readers to judge whether conditions in St Matthew's Hospital are more accurately reflected in Howard Sharron's article (NS 2 November) or in the reply from J. Pealing (NS 30 November). Personally I would surmise that the truth lies somewhere in between. I am prompted to write, however, by J. Pealing's statement that the article had 'done great harm to one of the most vulnerable sections of society'. One important respect in which mental patients are vulnerable is that they are generally unable to speak up for themselves. As one who has been treated in a relatively good hospital, where the standard of patient care is high but the general environment grim enough to depress the most resilient, I deplore the specious invocation of patients' interests by health administrators. The more that can be revealed about the miserable life led by thousands of people in all types of British mental institutions, the better.

J. Pealing goes on to say that some people are now 'showing reluctance to seek treatment'. In general rather than in particular, this is heartening news. All right-minded people regard psychiatric hospitals with a degree of dislike, and they are justified in doing so. Not until we really face up to and change the facts of psychiatric life can we hope for a civilised mental welfare service. The more the system's wretched inadequacy, and the suffering this causes, are played down, the longer it will be before ordinary people can view the prospect of psychiatric treatment with equanimity.

The task of public re-appraisal is not an attractive one. But whether or not Howard Sharron has exaggerated the facts with regard to St Matthew's it is greatly preferable that the general public should have some idea of life in psychiatric hospitals than that they should remain in the total ignorance which is, in my experience, normal.

99 Divinity Road, Oxford

What's in a name?

From Peter Richards

Peter Levi (NS 7 December) is surely wrong about the origin of Housman's 'Today the Roman and his trouble are ashes under Uricon'. The form Uriconium is still used on local road signs (one such being illustrated on the jacket of Margaret Gelling's recent book on place-names, *Signposts to the Past*) and it was certainly current when Housman was writing *A Shropshire Lad*. Jon Stallworthy describes how Wilfred Owen used to cycle over to Wroxeter in his youth to search for coins in the overgrown ruins of the Roman Baths and he quotes (p. 89) several stanzas of the early poem called 'Uriconium/An Ode' that resulted. According to my *Oxford Dictionary of Place-Names* Uriconium and Viroconium are both ancient forms and they are found side by side in the Antonine Itinerary. I can't help feeling that Housman chose the right one. 'Today the Roman and his trouble are ashes under Viroconium' would have been a line to rival 'The goal stands up, the keeper stands up to keep the goal'. I don't think Vaughan Williams or any biographer would have bothered.

Flat 2, 18 Emmanuel Road, Cambridge

Guardian Women

From Angela Phillips

Moving to *The Times* might satisfy the side of Penelope Mortimer's soul which insists that emancipated women should be treated just like men (NS 23 November). However, she will probably find that means isolating herself from the political and social concerns of half the population. The *Guardian* Women's Page will continue to be a vital resource to politically conscious women until the day when the rest of the newspaper world stops treating us as though we exist only to hang clothes on and to pretty up the front page. Don't knock it, we still need it.

62 Albert Palace Mansions, Lurline Gardens, London SW11

Advancing danger

From Nigel Halliday

John Spurling (NS 30 November) criticises the Post-Impressionism exhibition for failing to show 'the great fourfold advance in pictorial expression', but, for all that 'advance' or progress in art has become a very popular notion, it is nonetheless a very dangerous one, as is demonstrated by his article.

The danger of belief in 'advance' lies in the corollary that the precursors of that 'advance' are held to be more important *in their own time* than all their contemporaries. Thus John Spurling suggests that the exhibition should *make clear* the 'advance' from Gauguin, Seurat and Cézanne to the Fauves and the Cubists, with all other artists kept to a profile low enough not to obscure this 'advance'.

This is, to say the least, very shaky history. Undoubtedly it is important to interpret the Fauves and the Cubists with respect to their precursors (and really, who are the 'innocent visitors' to the RA who do not already know who the precursors are, that the point has to be proved again?). To interpret Gauguin, Seurat and Cézanne, however, only with regard to their progeny is to slip very easily into the fallacy of 'historical necessity', for it forecloses all other possibilities of historical development besides that which actually took place.

81 Clapham Common West Side, London SW4

Secret society

From Robin Ramsay

May I use the letters page of the NEW STATESMAN to ask if any of its readers have any information, have seen any references to, Cecil Rhodes's secret society *The Round Table*, circa 1896, *other than* that contained in Quigley's *Tragedy and Hope*? I am engaged in research which bears on the subject and would appreciate any information. (The problem with secret societies is their secrecy . . .)

35 High Street, Hull

Mailer misunderstood?

From Michael Harney

Penelope Mortimer's review of *The Executioner's Song* (NS 23 November) unfortunately appears as almost as cynical a piece of work as she would have us believe the book itself is. Much of the review displays the usual treatment that Mailer's work receives: a compound of preconception and an apparent lack of awareness of his earlier work. She describes, for instance, the period immediately before he wrote *Marilyn* in the following way: 'his novels were being called "inept", he hated to be known as plain journalist and he had prodigious personal liabilities . . .' But his last novel was in 1967 and between then and *Marilyn* (1973) there were seven major books including the much celebrated and, indeed, profitable *Armies of the Night*. Where was this 'wearing thin' she mentions? Where the need to make a quick buck so desperately? At the end of the Sixties and into the early Seventies Mailer's success was at its highest peak since the days of *The Naked and the Dead*.

It is wholly true that *Marilyn* is a bad book, but it is bad because Mailer went beyond his brief and his fee and had no time to revise what he had done, adequately. Having established her conception of the relationship of Mailer and Lawrence Schiller to *Marilyn*, Penelope Mortimer assumes that their relationship to *The Executioner's Song* is also established. As he said in his 'Parkinson' interview, Mailer was far from pleased at the prospect of being involved with Schiller again, but he was offered a large sum of money to write on a subject which he was fascinated by. I do not see how it is possible to suggest that he was doing the job purely and simply to make money. If that were the case, why did he not write a quick piece of reporting (like, for instance, *The Fight*)?

Another point is that the book is a radical departure in form and manner from his previous work. Where is that characteristic examination of his ego and centring in his consciousness which is so much a part of the earlier 'journalism'? It is surely a gross misreading of the book to suggest that Gilmore is given the Muhammad Ali treatment and 'raised from the dead as a . . . hero, tough, tender, sensitive, maligned, misunderstood'. The most remarkable fact about the book is that Mailer himself keeps out of it: there are no self-conscious analyses or judgments as in the past, but simply an extremely skilful and unobtrusive presentation of the material available. No heroes are raised, and that includes the author.

It is also disingenuous of Penelope Mortimer to suggest of the behaviour of the media that 'the discreet absence of commentary becomes the silence of consent'. Is it then to be the argument that Mailer's silence over Gilmore's life and the murders he commits is also the silence of consent? Would it not be easier to assume that these things are all part of the whole story and have therefore to be presented consistently, leaving any conclusions to be drawn by the reader?

The book is not without its failings, but its stature demands more in the way of analysis than Penelope Mortimer, or indeed any of the other reviewers I have read, have provided.

76 Herr's Road, Skipton, N. Yorks

More researches

From Andrew Watt

May I appeal to your readers for help. To assist me in my biographical researches, I wish to trace any diaries or letters by the following: Prof. W. J. Craig, d. 1906, editor of Arden Shakespeare; Prof. J. W. Hales, d. 1914, of Kings College, London; Rev. G. N. Leale, curate of St Paul's, Clapham, some time late 19th century. Please write with any information or suggestions to 69 New Kings Road, London SW6.

Miniami Azabu 4-1-12-2041, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106, Japan.

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FIRST PERSON
Arthur Marshall

Day by day

It is only very rarely that I am able, tucked away as I am in my cosy Devonian backwater, to bring readers a stimulating titbit of news, but every so often I chance, in my wide reading, to come upon something worth passing on, although the titbit that I am about to stagger you with dates back, I am afraid, to the year 1932, a year already made memorable for us by the consecration of Buckfast Abbey by Cardinal Bourne and by the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, such a well loved tribute to engineering skills down under. But for all that it is forty-seven years old, my titbit is none the less surprising for that. Indeed, the word 'titbit' is quite inadequate for this sensational item and I have no hesitation in changing the description (and please do so too in your minds) to that of either 'bombshell' or 'grenade', so explosively exciting is it.

Ready? In April, 1932, there was produced at the New Theatre in London (a handsome theatre now known, by way of a compliment to a splendid theatrical entrepreneur family, as The Albery) a play called *Napoleon: The Hundred Days*. It was translated from a foreign lingo and adapted for the English stage by none other than John Drinkwater, who would have been happy indeed if the play had remained at the New and earned royalties for even fifty days, let alone a hundred, but the public unfortunately decided that a fortnight of this dramatic treat was quite sufficient. 'Translated', you note, but even if I tell you that the original language of the play was Italian, would you be any nearer to guessing the author? Stand well back while I pull out the pin, for the author was Mussolini. There now! By 1932 he had evidently got the Italian railways running to time and was therefore free to devote himself to literary work.

Did he, one so wonders, attend rehearsals? Was he to be seen at lunchtime wolfing ravioli among the theatrical world at the Ivy Restaurant ('Why, hullo there, Noël!')? Did he, at the première, lurk at the back of the stalls, as playwrights are apt to do, and start the applause? Did he shower any actresses in the cast with costly blooms ('Oh but Benny, you shouldn't have!')? The mists have closed. All, alas, that we know is that he decorated the presenter of the play, Sydney Carroll, though here again we do not know with what he decorated him. Something metallic, probably, which doubtless patriotic Mr Carroll caused to be melted down in 1940 and then subsequently dropped, in bomb form, on the donor.

It was not the first Napoleon to be seen, however briefly, at the New Theatre for in 1929 I well recall a merry piece there called *Madame Plays Nap* ('Nap' being, in this case, chummy for Napoleon) in which no less a person than Dame Sybil Thorndike herself, seizing a chance to show admirers of St Joan her more skittish side, played a merry piece indeed called Citizeness Pawnbroker who, though firmly married, flirted dottily with the Emperor in an unlikely series of wild and weird goings-on and in which Dame Sybil, not always the most restrained of players, overacted her generous heart out. Her husband, Lewis Casson, played Nap and was to be seen gazing quizzically at her throughout, as well he might. The billboards outside the theatre announced the play as being 'A continuous scream', the persons responsible for tempting the public with such an advertisement evidently having forgotten that, in addition to laughter, it is also possible to scream with horror.

Although in the field of tyrants and general wickedness, nothing and nobody could possibly be nastier than Hitler, Mussolini made a stab at excelling him and managed, in addition, to be both craven and utterly contemptible, in a way that Hitler never perhaps quite was. If my thoughts seem to be currently directed towards these two prominent non-charmers ('both of them are top of my shit list' Maurice Bowra used, and rather too robustly and outspokenly for some, to boom in public places), it is because there has recently come my way an absorbing wartime diary by a Mrs Milburn. Finding herself, a middle-class and happily married woman resident in the Midlands, at the beginning of hostilities bewailing the joining up of her only child, a much loved son who was, after Dunkirk, to become a prisoner of war for the duration, Mrs Milburn resolved to keep a day by day record of events in her life, both great and small, with walks for the dog, Twink, rightly getting as much space as some foreign events ('Molotov has lunched with Hitler!').

The moment when she finds that her son, reported missing, is, although wounded, all right, is very moving ('My darling dear, you are alive!') but not very often does she give way ('I brimmed over') to emotion for there is, goodness knows, so much to be done. The blackout to see to (material purchased in Leamington), Hitler to ponder on ('How he sleeps at night I can't think'), the world situation to be noted ('We are trying to soothe Japan'), telegrams to be sent to the Prime Minister ('Declare war on the treacherous Bordeaux Government' and signed 'Mrs Milburn'), going to the right sources for information ('Our position was lucidly and fully explained in *The Times* editorial'), and trying not to mistake the whining of greyhounds at a local kennel for the early notes of the air-raid siren. And every so often there was a daring and pleasurable trip to London ('Of course I left my gas mask in the taxi . . . and so to Harvey Nichols for lunch').

The view of life is, as you see, that taken by many good, solid, fearless Englishwomen of the period and of all classes. There is an occasional explosion of rage ('Pah!!!') but on the whole there is both a quiet acceptance of discomforts and a complete certainty of ultimate victory. Meanwhile there were her duties as school-manager, church services to be constantly attended, sometimes by torch light when the electricity was off, requests from Lord Woolton 'to go carefully with the tin opener', Women's Institute functions, lectures on gas warfare, references to the Italians as Wops, leeks at 4½d each and incomprehensible Irish plays on the wireless ('We shut it off and did the jig-saw awhile').

Foreigners mostly get very short shrift. Hess, parachuted into Scotland and slightly damaged, was said to be progressing well in hospital ('as if one cared'), and his whole trip by plane is summed up as 'gross impertinence'. Then there was Russia, of whom one didn't know just what to make ('her ways are not our ways'). The ex-Duce, reported to have vamoosed to Germany, is briskly dismissed as 'that bombastic idiot'. False German broadcasts about successes on the Russian front are greeted with 'M'yes!'. A particularly transparent lie by Hitler becomes 'a great big whopper', and the Germans fare invariably badly ('a nasty race indeed'). All Mrs Milburn's friends knew exactly what to do if invaders landed ('Mrs Whitaker is going to make them a cup of coffee and poison it if they ever call at the Rectory'). So much for all that church-going! Love thy neighbour doesn't seem to have caught on as a motto ('They talk of hanging all the Gestapo Hurrah!'), and Mussolini has by now become 'that fat pomposity'.

Naturally there is throughout much preoccupation with food. The verger, doubtless weak from under-nourishment, faints at early service. The garden onions are found to have been attacked by the dreaded onion fly ('particularly vexing'). A chilly reception is given to eatables called Prem, Spam, Tang and Mor, and she allows herself an occasional outing (lunch at Coventry's Geisha Cafe and a matinee of *Gone With The Wind*). But in general food is no longer any sort of pleasure ('Toad-in-the-hole is *not* what it was').

Mrs Milburn's Diaries are admirably edited by Peter Donnelly and are published by Harrap at £6.95. They have a tragic ending. Her son duly returned to her from the prison camp, married happily and became the father of two children. And then, one morning in 1959 he was involved in a car accident on his way to work, an accident that was no fault of his, and died from his injuries. His mother, appalled at the waste of a life that had been preserved with some difficulty, did not long survive him, or would have wished to. I mention this just in case any reader decides, as a result, to drive a little more slowly and to take just that little bit more care.

Roger Woddis

Governmental

Mental hospital patients are to be given a Christmas handout of 25p.

How tender are the powers-that-be!
What boundless generosity
For Christ's sake they have shown us!
And yet how poor His Love beside
Their gracious gift this Christmastide!
O bless them for this bonus!
Thank them, rank them
Over Jesus, for they please us
And are gentle:
We the governed, they the mental!

All praise to those who see us right
And fill our darkened souls with light
Beyond imagination!
Rejoice in all their works, although
The bounty that they now bestow
Can only cause inflation.
Glory, glory!
And in praising the amazing
Mr Prentice,
Know ye are *non compos mentis!*

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Helen McNeil

The Midnight Cry

The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850 by J. F. C. HARRISON *Routledge* £9.95

Blake and the New Age by KATHLEEN RAINE *Allen & Unwin* £7.50

J. F. C. Harrison's *The Second Coming* isn't about the Second Coming but about dozens of millenarian prophets and prophetesses in Britain and the United States and thousands, nay millions, of their unhappy followers. The prophets and their flocks weren't unhappy during their visionary ecstasies – quite the contrary. Their delight was usually both pure and simple. Millenarians made themselves unhappy because their particular style of joy led them sooner or later to feel an overwhelming desire for an even greater joy, one which by its nature could never be experienced: they wanted the world to end, and they wanted it now.

Every mystic makes a kind of argument from intensity. The shattering intensity of the mystical vision is what defines it as divine. What is special about the millenarian is that his or her mystic experience is projected forward into the future, where it is meant to annihilate *all* time, not just the visionary's own human time. The millenarian binds his visionary joy to a specific future event, the end of time. Millenarian prophecy thus becomes the study of what ought to happen next, and the millenarian believer feels an ever-delayed childlike hope: if only the world would end. Of course, if wishes were horses, then beggars would ride.

Ecstatic experience is used in millenarianism to prove that soon we shall be freed from *all* experience. Now death has been setting us free from life quite efficiently for some time, but these romantic millenarians are as coy about death as they are eager to say how mere human experience will be superseded by an erotic or arithmetic bliss. They doubt whether any experience can lead to salvation. One of Harrison's explanations for 18th and 19th-century millenarianism is that, like Methodism, it offered a release of feeling in an overly rational society. Ironically, it also reproduced the life-denying spiritual poverty of Deism by its own undervaluing of the believer's life.

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian's journey through allegorical obstacles helps the faithful to read meaning into their own experiences as they journey through life. However, the visions of millenarian prophets like Richard Brothers, Joanna Southcott or Mother Ann Lee (the founder of the American Shakers) are all about places or events beyond history. When time ends, humble Joanna Southcott can become the bride of the holy Bridegroom, lying 'in the hand of the Lord . . . as perfect as ever woman felt in the hand of her husband'. This late-phase millenarianism tries to escape from the pilgrimage through life because the journey threatens to be meaningless, an alienation which owes as much to the Industrial Revolution as to Deism. Since the Apocalypse is the only biblically approved event which can compare in intensity to a heavenly visitation, the millenarian visionary checks with the Book of Revelation and concludes that surely the Second Coming is at hand.

Forsaking everything for their hopes and their leaders, millenarians left themselves emotionally and financially vulnerable. The American prophet William Miller told his 50,000 to 100,000 believers that the world would end on 22 October 1844, and when it didn't, the believers, who had given away their property, suffered a mass breakdown: 'such a spirit of weeping came over us as I have never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.' The embittered Millerites awakened into the real world of money, lawsuits, sex, power and death, the world Blake called 'Experience'.

When the Last Day came and went, and the last midnight passed without the Midnight Cry, the orthodox and literal-minded millenialist believer was forced into allegory if he – or, more often, she – was not to despair. The death of the prophet and the passing of the Last Day provoked a crisis of interpretation whose resolution determined whether a millenarian movement would go under, like the sects of Brothers and Southcott, or survive and flourish, like the Mormons. A more mundane test was how well organised the sect's executive and printing press were. The 64-year-old prophetess Joanna Southcott died a few weeks after the date in 1814 when she had rashly prophesied she would give birth to Shiloh, the apocalyptic 'man-child' promised in *Genesis* 49.10 and *Revelation* 12.5. Suddenly the thousands of followers whom Southcott had 'sealed' into her garbled millenarian sect had to decide whether Shiloh was 'of the spirit', to be sought within themselves, or whether they should follow one George Turner whose voice had announced that he was Shiloh. The symbolist-minded group kept control of Southcott's infamous sealed box of writings and clung to their 'fireside' faith, as they called it, for a generation or two. Those who needed stronger authority followed Turner. When Turner died in 1821, many of them fell under the sway of the sadistic prophet John Wroe, who had a heavenly voice which directed him to whip miscreants and deflower virgins. It is a dismal tale.

As a movement which promises this-worldly bliss by ending this world, millenarianism is born to lose. It has always attracted the losers of this world. Norman Cohn, Christopher Hill, B. S. Capp and others have shown how millenarianism fuelled the fervour of medieval rebels and 17th-century Puritan Ranters and Fifth Monarchy men. By the late 18th century the link between millenarianism and action was weakening.

Harrison remarks that several men were 'taken to the edge of radical republicanism' by their millenarian convictions, but where it is discernible, the movement appears to have gone the other way, with milleniarism offering a refuge from political action – often a highly authoritarian refuge. Chiliasm, the belief in the 1,000 year reign of the risen Christ, which played such a large role in Puritan religious politics, has virtually disappeared. Harrison is on more certain ground when he argues that millenarianism and republican revolution were aspects of the same impulse, but he doesn't reckon with the fact that most revolutionary thought by then followed cyclical, progressive and constitutionalist models. For Thomas Paine or William Godwin society continued, its form developed. In Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire and Gibbon, the 18th century established modern historiography. After the end of the 18th century, millenarianism deserved its bad reputation; once it gave energy and direction to a desire for change, but increasingly it attracted those who had given up trying to live in society.

Perhaps Shiloh was 'of the spirit'. Perhaps the apocalypse itself is actually an inner revolution in which the husk of fallen man must be made to fall away, freeing the 'human form divine' for a new life. William Blake has become the bearer of such a symbolic millenarianism to generations who have no idea of the real thing and so can delight in its vocabulary of an absolute, eternal joy. If

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Blake's *The Everlasting Gospel* is romantic mythologising, then Blake simply must not mean what he is saying, but the apocalypses which end Blake's three long 'Prophetic Books', *Milton, The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem* do function as spiritual renovation through the imagination. At the end of *Jerusalem*, fragmented man is unified as 'the wonders Divine/Of Human Imagination' eternally re-create space and time. For Blake linguistic and symbolic vividness is always available because Jerusalem is in us here and now, not there and some day. 'Jerusalem is called Liberty / Among the Sons of Albion.'

Katherine Raine's magisterial *Blake and Tradition* dispelled forever the notion that Blake was a crude auto-didact. *Blake and the New Age* is a collection of general lectures on Blake the visionary. Many of the speculations of *Blake and Tradition* show up in *Blake and the New Age* where they have been transformed into familiar old facts. Dr Raine says that Blake's 'Forms Eternal are Plato's Ideas', and refers to 'visionaries like Plato and Plotinus, like William Blake' when, (whatever the view of Plato involved here) the very few times Blake actually mentions Plato, it is to attack 'The Stolen and Perverted Writings . . . of Plato & Cicero, which all Men ought to contemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible'.

Dr Raine is less interested in Blake the poet than in Blake the mouthpiece. 'With due respect', she says, 'Blake's vision of Nature is not his own (except by adoption), but again Swedenborg's.' Blake certainly absorbed his reading, but he wrote out of a Protestant tradition of individual revelation. Dr Raine makes it sound as if Blake merely did for heaven and hell what his contemporary Erasmus Darwin did for plants: versified a received knowledge. More significantly, Dr Raine's Blake is hermetic, a secret reader of secret texts, looking backwards to a bookish, apolitical inheritance which the modern reader requires great erudition to understand. For all the passionate attention that Dr Raine gives Blake, hers is a deeply conservative reading.

Stephen Fender

New Worlds

Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers: The Diligent Writers of Early America by WAYNE FRANKLIN *Chicago* £9

Separate Country: A Literary Journey Through the American South by PAUL BINDING *Paddington* £5.95

Scott Fitzgerald's green breast of the new world may have gone a bit withered, but the simultaneous appearance of these two books, despite their differences, shows how evergreen is the topic of travel in America. Mr Franklin deals with the earliest descriptions of the Continent, from the letters of Columbus and Cortés, through the voyages collected in Hakluyt and the various annalists of New England settlement, down to Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and William Bartram's account of Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas.

It is a strenuously academic book, not easy to construe, and at least some of the difficulties might have been avoided. For example, the notes and plates would make a book in themselves, but Mr Franklin eschews plainer guides to his material, such as a chronological bibliography. He also goes in for sentences like, 'The task of science in the face of terra incognita is to deny the negation of that term by making the place to which it refers known, *cognita*.'

On the whole, though, what makes the book hard to read is its originality, and its intelligent treatment of a complex subject. Mr Franklin has moved way beyond a historian's analysis of data to be mined from the original accounts, beyond even the generalisation, established in Howard Mumford Jones's *O Strange New World*, that Europe invented America while discovering it. What interest him are the varieties of this interference between fact and concept. He knows that even a simple description of items in a landscape must be infected by the rules of language itself, and even that his book is an exploration of explorations.

The categories of discoverer, explorer and settler, are not, apparently, a matter of chronology (some of his latest instances fall into the first group) but of what he calls the author's 'centre of narrative awareness'. The discoverer makes a catalogue of animals, plants and topographical features to suggest natural profusion in an idealised landscape. The explorer populates this scene, placing it in the world of time so as to project a glorious future set against the dismal present and past in the Old Country. The settler, forced to confront the actual outcome of his project, reacts by moralising its failures and successes according to standards upheld by an imperial or providential ideology.

It may be that these divisions are too schematic. Certainly the mood and purpose of the settlement narrative set it off from the other two, though the boundary between discovery and exploration seems more hazy. Besides, an author might employ all three strategies, and more, in the same text. I'm not clear why Mr Franklin says so little about apocalyptic and typological structures – unmistakably present in 'western' projects, whether physical or cultural, until well into the 19th century. For example, he is right to connect Whitman's energetic lists of plants, animals, places and geographical features with the catalogues in Discovery narratives, but he might have added that the rhetoric of the catalogue was an attempt to strip away the accretions of traditional (European) forms – including syntax itself – that obscured the reality of material being described; and that in Emerson's and Whitman's case, such lists were an answer to that woefully negative catalogue, uttered by Cooper long before James's book on Hawthorne, of cultural and political forms missing from the American scene.

Perhaps a book so full of subtle analysis does not need a system of classification. In any case Mr Franklin's splendid conclusion abandons all schemes – including his own – in a plea for those alternative voices that weren't heard, the 'traveller's tales that never did get told, or were told in . . . a garbled and self-serving form by others'. For finally, as he says, the story of American settlement becomes too polyvocal to be controlled by the Bradfords and the Winthrops, and the rest of the Massachusetts hegemony. It is a theme for Pynchon's Slothrop, or Hawthorne's Maule.

For some time now, Paul Binding has admired bluegrass music and southern novelists, so he has done the refreshingly old-fashioned thing of making a literary pilgrimage to the land of his longing. Brushing aside the intentional fallacy (not to mention a dozen more modern prohibitions) he has tried to learn more about the writing of the American South by visiting the authors in their accustomed surroundings and actually talking to them *about their work*. The result is an unassuming and informative book that interleaves travels, interviews with authors, and critical discussions of their poems and stories.

Literature and life rush into each other. Mr Binding's first view of Atlanta's modern skyline, from a garden in spring, reminds him of Bunyan's Celestial City as seen from the Vale of Beulah. In a Cajun village a boy swings a small alligator around by the tail, recalling an episode in Eudora Welty's story 'No Place for You, My Love'. 'Wherever you travel in the South,' adds Mr Binding, 'its writers have anticipated you, have already captured the typical sights, sounds, happenings and situations.'

Which means that southern writers stay at home, and write about home; they have a sense of place, and their novels, however gothic, respect the vernacular materials of ordinary life around them. In this, as in so many other ways, they are the opposite of northern American writers – so famously cut off from the land and from a sense of community that Melville and Hawthorne admired each other in print before discovering they lived eight miles apart in the northwestern corner of Massachusetts. The southern writers know each other. Madison Jones was taught at Vanderbilt University by Donald Davidson, the 'Fugitive' poet. Walker Percy's uncle used to play tennis with Faulkner. 'Peter Taylor has known Andrew Lytle and Allen Tate since his early years' and was taught by John Crowe Ransom at Kenyon College. They all adore Eudora – rightly, it seems.

Also unlike their northern cousins, southern writers are predominantly Christian and have a sense of the past. So does Mr Binding, who is as fascinated by cultural layers as a 19th-century American travelling in Europe. Even the bizarre can be naturalised by reference to tradition. In New Orleans he was taken aback by an advertisement for edible underwear in soda-fountain flavours, 'He eats hers, she eats his', until he 'realised that from its earliest days the *Vieux Carré* has been the home of the disreputable'. That's all right, then.

Separate Country leaves a reader with a desire to know more about southern writers – *and* it provides a bibliography – so it achieves its purpose. But how can even the briefest survey of southern society register so little, apart from minor irritation, at the fundamentalist religion of the South, especially since it was by drawing on this tradition that Martin Luther King could move among these people and stir them to the greatest social revolution of our time? There are only two sentences on King in this book, and by this account, not much more about him in the work of contemporary southern writers. Perhaps their sense of place and history is, after all, a trifle selective.

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Alex Callinicos

Marxism & the Academics

Issues in Marxist Philosophy edited by John Mepham & D. H. Ruben *Harvester* 3 vols £10.50 & £3.95 per vol.
Rereading Capital by BEN FINE & LAURENCE HARRIS *Macmillan* £7.95 & £3.50.
Marxism and Class Theory; a Bourgeois Critique by FRANK PARKIN *Tavistock* £6.95.

Marxism is dead, or so the Parisian intellectuals whose interpretations of Marx have so influenced the rest of us for the past three decades now say. If so, marxism (at least in its academic, western versions) succumbed to the fate of Narcissus, too self-absorbed to engage with the outside world. As Frank Parkin puts it:

> Contemporary western marxism, unlike its classical predecessor, is wholly the creation of academic social theorists . . . The natural constituency of this marxism is not of course the working class, but the massed ranks of undergraduates and postgraduate students in the social sciences; its content and design mark it out exclusively for use in the lecture theatre, the seminar room, and the doctoral dissertation.

These books in their different ways bear witness to this situation. All are the work of English-speaking academics concerned with the contemporary relevance of marxism. All concentrate on methodological questions – what Perry Anderson called 'the rules of social enquiry discovered by Marx'. None succeeds in bringing these rules to bear on contemporary capitalism – although, ironically, it is Parkin, concerned to refute marxism, who comes closest to doing so.

In a sense this comment is unfair, especially when applied to *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*. Considering the level of philosophical discussion of marxism traditional to this country – a level set by Karl Popper and his like – we should be very grateful for a collection of essays by English-speaking professional philosophers who both know their Marx and are themselves marxists. Some of the essays are very good. John Mepham's discussion of the relation of the *Grundrisse* to *Capital* in the light of Roman Rosdolsky's magisterial commentary on the former especially sticks in my mind. And yet . . . The general introduction to the three volumes states that:

> an attempt is made to open up discussion in a way that draws more on the English-speaking philosophical virtues of disciplined argument and attention to detailed elaboration and defence of one's own positions

than on the work of such continental practitioners as Althusser and Colletti. There is something about this passage (and others like it) which sets my teeth on edge. If only Althusser or Colletti had done a graduate course in philosophical logic at Oxford or Harvard . . .

The most distinctive arguments to be found in these essays – those which insist on the existence of a structured, internally connected reality existing independently of and prior to our discourse – take on much of their meaning from debates among academic philosophers concerning the validity of empiricism, which tends to deny both the priority of being over thought and the existence of necessary connections in nature. The doctrines of 'realism' and 'natural necessity' which so many of these essays assert have nothing useful to say about the main problem bequeathed to us by contemporary philosophy of science, namely the fact that we have no access to reality independent of our theories concerning that reality. There is no experimental result so secure that it cannot be challenged and reinterpreted by the theoretical scientist – indeed, some of the greatest scientific theories (for example, Newtonian physics) cut their teeth by overturning or refining the empirical evidence. The emphasis in the essays by Andrew Collier and Roy Bhaskar on the centrality of experimentation to the sciences is, therefore, simply beside the point.

Methodological questions play a large part also in Ben Fine and Laurence Harris's book The title, besides referring to the seminal study by Louis Althusser and others, *Reading Capital*, accurately sums up the present state of marxist economics in this country. Discussion has concentrated on fundamentals. In the search for the right starting point *Capital* has been read, reread and ruthlessly put to the question by different schools of left-wing economists. There has been endless argument over the labour theory of value and the falling rate of profit, with some (notably Ian Steedman) arguing that these essential features of Marx's theory should be ditched.

Fine and Harris provide a lucid and sophisticated exposition and defence of the principles of marxist economics. They show how both the 'fundamentalist' defenders of Marx and the critics of the labour theory of value share a common misunderstanding of the complexity of the structure of *Capital*. They argue, in my view rightly, that the labour theory of value must be understood less as a theory of relative price than as the indispensable starting point for the analysis of the laws of motion of capitalism. Unfortunately, the authors' touch becomes much less sure in the second half of the book, where they move on to discuss various problems arising from the nature of contemporary capitalism – notably that of the economic role of the state. Here we are served at best with some scattered insights, mainly involving the clarification of concepts rather than their application. There is no sense of a coherent grasp of the nature of capitalism in its present phase. This is a pity, since in many respects this is the best book to have come out of the younger generation of marxist economists in this country.

Frank Parkin concentrates on what he sees as marxism's methodological weaknesses. Marxism, he argues, at least in its classical form, privileges one form of social conflict – the class struggle determined by the relations of production – at the expense of all others. The result is an inability to conceptualise those forms of conflict – in particular racial, national, ethnic, religious and sexual struggles – which cut across class lines. Parkin has a great deal of fun showing how attempts by contemporary western marxists, notably the late Nicos Poulantzas, to modify the class-struggle model so that other forms of conflict may be accommodated lead to the effective abandonment of the model.

The alternative, he argues, is to return to Max Weber, conceiving class struggle as merely one form of 'social closure', 'the process by which social collectivities seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles'. Parkin isolates two main forms of closure – exclusion, through which a dominant group seeks to preserve its existing position, and usurpation, whereby a dominated group strives to win its place in the sun. But he is particularly interested in cases of 'dual closure', where a dominated group responds to its exclusion both by usurpation *and* by in turn oppressing other dominated groups. Examples are the Protestant working class in northern Ireland and the white working class in South Africa. Dual closure is the aporia of marxism, Parkin seems to believe – the case it cannot explain because here other forms of social conflict overlay and partially nullify class struggle.

The case is put clearly and forcefully. Parkin has much to say that is extremely perceptive – for example, his discussion of the conceptual difficulties caused by western marxism's flirtations with the notion of bonapartism is excellent. However, this book is a salutary example of an author's polemical zeal undermining his arguments. Parkin can never resist (what he believes to be) a crushing *bon mot*. Sometimes his shots strike home ('inside every neo-marxist there seems to be a neo-weberian struggling to get out'). At other times they lead him to commit crass errors. For example: 'On current evidence it would be quite forgivable to conclude that the preferred marxist reponse to the fact of racial or communal strife is to ignore it.' This is tripe, I'm afraid. Parkin seems to be unaware of Kautsky and Lenin's writings on the national question, Otto Bauer's massive work, *Social Democracy and the National Question*, Abraham Leon's classic on the Jewish question and Trotsky's discussions of black nationalism. Nor does he seem to know about the quite considerable marxist literature on Northern Ireland (for example, the books by Eamonn McCann, Geoff Bell and Michael Farrell).

Parkin cannot, however, plead ignorance

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when it comes to South Africa. He simply finds the idea that marxists might try to analyse apartheid a bit of a joke. He summarises recent discussion thus in order to bring out what he believes to be its evident absurdity:

> In the face of a fairly unambiguous political alliance between white South African workers and the white capitalist class, marxism is at pains to portray a more complex and intricate state of affairs. Beneath this surface appearance, the phantom forces of the capitalist mode of production are silently burrowing away at the foundations of the racial order by exacerbating class tensions within the dominant ethnic group, thereby threatening the political cohesion of white supremacy.

'Fairly unambiguous'? Tell that to the white mine-workers whose strike earlier this year against the introduction of blacks into more skilled jobs was allowed to go down to defeat by the Nationalist government they elected. Recent developments – especially the growing integration of Afrikaner and English-speaking capital and the attempts by P.W. Botha to create a black labour aristocracy – have led to a growing backlash among white workers, as shown by recent by-election results, in which the Nationalist vote has fallen. This backlash has increased support for the far right; however, the peculiar position of the white working class, suspended as it is mid-way between white capital and the black majority, cannot be explained in primarily racial terms, without some understanding of the way in which it has been shaped by the dynamics of capital accumulation in South Africa (see, for example, F. A. Johnstone's *Race, Class and Gold*).

Ignoring other howlers, two basic points need to be made. First, Parkin misunderstands the nature of Marx's method, which, as Fine and Harris show very well, is one of 'rising from the abstract to the concrete'. Starting from certain essential features of the capitalist mode of production outlined in *Capital* Volume 1, the analysis acquires increasing complexity and concreteness as it proceeds, drawing ever closer to the study (and transformation) of actual social formations. Parkin seems to believe that unless the analysis at its most abstract level contains at least implicitly all the complexities of actual societies with their racial and sexual divisions it has failed. This is a bit like claiming that the law of free fall is false because, owing to air resistance and other such factors, falling bodies do not actually accelerate at a rate of 32 feet per second per second.

Secondly, we should note the conservative political implications of Parkin's arguments. Relations of domination and subordination are intrinsic to society, or so passages like the following seem to imply:

> The relationship (between classes) is one of mutual antagonism and permanent *tension*; that is, a condition of unrelieved distributive struggle that is not necessarily impossible to contain.

And in the conclusion Parkin endorses (albeit not uncritically) the attitude to change of social democracy, which 'aims to administer first aid to psychic and social injuries caused by human existence, not to effect a permanent change'. 'Social closure', then, is a feature of 'human existence', not, as Marx argued, the result of certain exploitative production relations. In the end this sophisticated 'neo-weberian' critique of marxism seems little different from Popper's crudities. Piecemeal 'social engineering' is permissible, but collective action for the liberation of humanity is a chimaera. How very convenient.

Anna Coote

Would you Mind?

Sexual Harassment of Working Women by CATHERINE MACKINNON *Yale* £14.20 & £3.75

Women for Hire: A Study of the Female Office Worker by FIONA MCNALLY *Macmillan* £10 & £4.95

It isn't easy to get people to take sexual harassment seriously as a problem that besets women at work. ('Do you get harassed?' '*I* should be so lucky!') After all, what is wrong with a bit of horseplay in the office? A girl looks attractive, her boss makes a pass. He's only doing what comes naturally and it must be more fun than typing invoices . . .

A few years ago, feminists began to explode popular myths about rape. Two of the most persistent were that 'women ask for it' and 'men can't help themselves'. Perhaps these have now been discredited in the context of rape, but they have survived as powerful ammunition against women who 'lose their sense of humour' and complain about sexual harassment at work. Another well-worn myth is that women must want to be sexually coerced because they fantasise about it. But as feminist writer Martha Weinman Lear has explained, that kind of wishful thinking reflects no more than a woman's desire 'to feel free of guilt in a sexual encounter of her own choosing'.

> I used to have this fantasy: Two gangsters grab me off the street, throw me into a car, blindfold me and head for the gang's headquarters . . . and there is the Boss, and he looks just like Marlon Brando . . . he takes me into the bedroom . . . I try to resist, Lord *knows* how I try, but he overwhelms me . . . (Note how selective our fantasies are: it was no pimpled street-corner drooler who raped me, it was *Marlon Brando*.)

So it is with sexual harassment. When it comes to the actual experience, it's never the Paul Newman figure from Personnel, but the fellow with the bad breath or the bald head or the 17 grandchildren: an uninvited and often fairly gruesome intrusion – as Catherine MacKinnon demonstrates. Nancy Filhouer, for example, left her job because she could no longer tolerate her employer's behaviour. He was constantly propositioning her, although she had made it clear she wasn't interested; he would pat her behind and 'make comments to his friends about her figure or legs whenever she wore a dress, implying that she was a loose woman who would do anything with anyone'. Carmita Wood was forced to leave by a male superior who had a habit of leaning against her when he spoke to her, 'immobilising her between his own body, the chair and the desk'. A female worker in a camera store was harassed beyond endurance by male colleagues peering down her blouse 'from the upper level and stairways above the main sales area, assisted by binoculars or telephoto lenses'.

According to MacKinnon, women are prey to this kind of behaviour in most work places – all that varies is the degree of subtlety, which can range from innuendo to outright grabbing. In many cases, it is a condition of employment: if a woman complains or resists, she will lose her job. Like wife battering (until recently), sexual harassment has remained an 'invisible' problem – and for similar reasons. It is trivialised, or dismissed as a 'personal' matter between the man and the woman which is nobody else's business. The victims often feel implicated, and therefore too guilty or ashamed to make a complaint.

The author is a lawyer and her chief object is to show that sexual harassment at work can amount to unlawful sex discrimination. In doing so she has produced a fascinating and (so far) unique feminist analysis of sex discrimination law. The fact that she is writing about the United States hardly matters. The law is similar in Britain, and so are the conventions of male-female interaction.

MacKinnon's legal analysis gives us some unexpected insights into the complexities of sex discrimination; and her study of sexual harassment provides a useful discipline for examining the law. If a woman complained of sex discrimination because her employer demanded sexual favours, would her case be weakened if she had already complied because she was afraid of losing her job? Does sexual harassment amount to discrimination *on grounds of sex* if it is directed only at some (e.g. younger, more attractive) women?

We are presented with two contrasting legal approaches to sex discrimination: the 'differences' approach, which accepts that there are all sorts of ways in which men and women are different, and deals with specific areas where women have established the right to equal treatment; and the 'inequality' approach, by which 'real differences [are] not allowed to burden women's social status', and the purpose of the law is to 'eliminate the legal supports for male supremacy'. Her arguments put us to shame. Neither feminist campaigners nor parliamentary protagonists in this country have bothered to develop a coherent theory about our new anti-discrimination laws.

Back in 1972 Mary Kathleen Benet wrote an amusing and perceptive book called *Secretary* which examined (probably for the first time) the way in which the 'sexual roles that women play in "real life" have been transferred to the office'. According to Fiona McNally, Benet's book was 'unlikely to gain academic respectability, especially because of the author's journalistic background'. And she sets out from there, her status as a sociologist weighing heavily upon her, to seek the respectability poor Ms Benet missed. The results are disappointing by any standards. We hear far too little about the women themselves – without whose pounding of typewriters, dusting of rubber plants and patient boosting of male egos the business world would almost cease to function. McNally accepts uncritically the surveys of women's motivations carried out by the Alfred Marks Bureau, which can hardly be regarded as an impartial source. And she makes only passing reference to the enormous changes which have (or are about to) overcome female office workers. For example, the economic recession has put a new premium on office jobs, since they are still in relatively good supply: how has that changed the status of women who do the work? What impact will microprocessors have on the 'secretarial' function? (A male executive cannot sexually harass a computer, one imagines.)

Only in the penultimate chapter are we

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treated to a description of life in a dismal Midlands office, based on the author's own experience of three months' work in the filing department. It is a typical female ghetto. Working conditions are appalling and all the women say they loathe the place. Temps come and go, but the 15 permanent staff stay and stay. What keeps them there is certainly not the money, nor even a lack of alternative employment, but the friendships they form with each other.

> Nearly all the girls went out with the others from the office in the evenings either to discotheques, parties or pubs . . . [they] wore all their new clothes to the office, despite the hazards of dirt and sharp edges on the filing cabinets . . . social life *was* the office.

After the long search for academic respectability, this piece of pure journalism is just about all that makes the book worth reading.

Robert Hewison

Pocket Books

Allen Lane King Penguin by J. E. MORPURGO *Hutchinson* £9.95

Allen Lane was not a nice man but he was very possibly a great man. The tension between these two dimensions of his subject can be felt in every page of J. E. Morpurgo's biography, from the time that Allen Williams-Lane went to work for his distant cousin John Lane at The Bodley Head in 1919, to the tortured afterword in which Morpurgo stresses the difficulty he had in writing about a man with whom he worked for 25 years, with whom he had a grandson in common, and with whom he finally quarrelled bitterly.

Allen Lane's greatness, of course, lies in his creation of Penguins, in the paper-back revolution he precipitated, and in the transformation of a £100 company into a public corporation worth millions at the time of his death in 1970. It is well known that cheap reprints in paper bindings were not Lane's invention; his skill lay in costing, design and marketing, and an order from Woolworth's did the rest. The key factor was the timing, and here Morpurgo, enthralled by the early days in the crypt of Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, tends to underestimate the wider cultural factors that for the same reasons made Gollancz's Left Book Club and Lorenz's *Picture Post* such a success in the run up to the second world war.

The war, too, was nicely timed for Penguins, for their energetic pre-war response to contemporary anxiety with Penguin Specials entitled them to a large paper ration, and mass, intelligent reading was needed, by a mass mobilised society. (That both battledress and the standard issue gas mask container had pockets exactly matching the dimensions of a Penguin was another bit of Lane's luck.) After the war that familiarised a generation with Penguins as *the* source of literature and information, Lane's restlessness with routine kept his firm energised with new and profitable projects.

The greatness of Allen Lane, and of Penguin, was achieved however by a combination of low cunning and low wages. We do not hear much about authors except that they were glad to accept Lane's modest royalties in exchange for the Penguin cachet, but Lane appears to have exploited his staff ruthlessly, beginning with his own brothers, Dick and John, who drew no salary in the first two years of Penguin's existence. While Lane treated the firm like a private bank, his employees worked long hours for little money, and he ensured that they were kept on their toes by a deliberate vagueness as to what their precise duties were. The principle of divide and rule kept power in his own hands, and the uncertainties caused by the perpetual crises he created generated an enthusiasm for further sacrifice from his staff. At least, from those who stayed. Lane's socialism suited him in the pre-war period, though he tended to shrug it off later, and he resisted the unionisation of his firm for as long as he could. His business dealings outside the firm were habitually devious, and ruthless.

Lane could not tolerate leadership rivals, even at the cost of having no successor. He had no son, and it is tempting to see in the unhappinesses of his private life a punishment for his business methods (his private passion for horoscopes and graphology betrayed an inner uncertainty). He feared that Penguin would die with him, and in a sense it did, for the firm was taken over by Pearson Longman less than two months after his death.

J. E. Morpurgo, who became an executive in 1946 and whose son married Lane's eldest

daughter, observed this hero with a tragic flaw at close quarters, and the paradox of Lane's greatness strains his writing. This is not a 'business history', but since Lane's life *was* his work, it is the story of Penguins. At times Morpurgo seems carried on by Lane's own enthusiasm for new projects, so that for instance we learn about the launching of *Penguin New Writing* in 1940, but not its extinction in 1950, which is of equal cultural significance. He is also bad about supplying dates, and finds too many things 'not inconsiderable'. *Allen Lane King Penguin* demonstrates how unpleasant publishers can be, and what great leadership and imagination they can show. The satisfaction of working for Penguin, and the odd kind word from Allen Lane, made up for the hardship. 'It was his habit of doing things like sending these notes,' said one long serving employee, 'that made one work oneself to death on his behalf.'

Andrew Motion

Alien Eyes

A Martian Sends a Postcard Home by CRAIG RAINE *Oxford* £2.95

Poems 1962-78 by DEREK MAHON *Oxford* £5.75 & £3.25

If Craig Raine didn't exist he'd have to be invented. After the Movement's ironical circumspection, and the agonised candour of confessional poets, his work represents a long-awaited return to exuberant imaginative playfulness. But fulfilling the prophecies of literary trend-spotters hasn't ensured him a universally warm welcome – like most original books his first collection, *The Onion, Memory*, sharply divided public opinion. In the year or so since its publication, however, there have been signs that several erstwhile opponents have become repentant advocates – sometimes so admiringly that Raine has been promoted from *enfant terrible* to Grand Young Man with unseemly haste. *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home* gives a chance to assess his claim to the new title, and because it follows hard on the heels of its predecessor, it does so at a point which would seem previous in almost any other poet's career. The advantage of this, obviously, is that it confirms the impression of abundance he has already given. The disadvantage is that it risks provoking the charge of repetitiveness or self-parody.

A few poems in the new book can be accused and found guilty. But feelings of *déjà vu* are usually infiltrated by pleasure at discovering Raine's energy and generosity undiminished. The innocent precision of his metaphors is astonishing – nowhere more so than in the title poem's description of a telephone:

> In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,
> that snores when you pick it up.
>
> If the ghost cries, they carry it
> to their lips and soothe it to sleep
>
> with sounds. And yet, they wake it up
> deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

This kind of perception is more than simply a means by which the ordinary becomes strange again. It's also Raine's method of realising and releasing emotion. Once, extraordinarily, he was accused of heartlessness; in fact, poem after poem registers a deep affection for what he sees. His way of looking is also a way of baring his heart.

Raine knows this only too well. But where he was prepared to keep quiet about it in *The Onion, Memory*, his recent poems suggest that he wants to tell us – as well as show us – how much he cares. The result is that we feel less inclined to believe him. 'Shallots' and 'Down on the Funny Farm' both threaten their own integrity by introducing chunks of self-analysis, and 'In the Mortuary' contains another, related cause for anxiety. As so often elsewhere, he seeks to record his compassion by examining a physical detail, but exploits the strategy to a point at which technique commands more attention than content:

> Somewhere else, not here, someone
> knows her hair is parted wrongly

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and cares about these cobwebs
in the corners of her body.

This tendency for Raine's poems to be knowingly tender, and thereby have too palpable a design on us, is a disquieting development. To some extent, no doubt, it's the product of containment within the peculiarities of his style: the longer he uses it, the more debilitatingly self-conscious he becomes. But he's aware, as well, of the need to overcome this danger – hence the significantly large number of narrative poems in the book. The stories and characters in 'Oberfeldwebel Beckstadt', for instance, or 'In the Kalahari Desert', are seized upon as the means of escaping his own tyrannical characteristics. The trouble is that try as he might, he can't keep himself at bay. Brilliant metaphors break up the sequential flow into a series of fragments, and masks slip to reveal the poet as we've always known him. Raine is not the first poet to cast a Martian eye on life, on death – it's his concentration on the procedure that makes him an innovator.

Derek Mahon, for instance, also considers himself to be 'an enlightened alien', but never allows the feeling to dominate his attention. Throughout *Poems 1962-1978* his loving, witty scrutiny of the world is balanced by a longing to escape its failures and sadnesses. The upshot is a prolonged and fascinating debate which – lately, at least – has shown no sign of being resolved but every sign of stimulating him to excel himself.

The terms of Mahon's argument haven't changed much in the course of his career, but their implications have steadily broadened and clarified. (His revisions consolidate this achievement: the alterations to titles, forms and texts are all made in the interests of resonant simplicity.) Early poems register the mixture of pleasure and pain which derives from his involvement with 'A worldly time under this worldly sky' and admit – albeit rather mildly – that to evade its demands is to neglect his human responsibilities. More recently, these demands have become increasingly insistent and unattractive. He has always viewed Belfast – in some respects – as a 'desperate city', but while the Troubles intensified they gave it a particularly terrible aspect. And when *The Snow Party* appeared in 1975, it explored the tensions of his love/hate relationship with grim determination. On one hand, as 'The Last of the Fire Kings' illustrates, Northern Ireland concentrates a sense of home which is sharpened by being endangered. On the other, its 'fire-loving/People' threaten to turn any such feeling into a submissive collusion with their barbarities:

Demanding that I inhabit,
Like them, a world of
Sirens, bin-lids
And bricked-up windows –

Not to release them
From their ancient curse
But to die their creature and be thankful.

Given these conditions, it's hardly surprising that Mahon is tempted to perfect a 'cold dream/Of a place out of time'. But his utopian ideals are never allowed to degenerate into escapist fantasies – largely because his commitment to everyday life is unshakeable. Sometimes it's the very existence of 'muted phenomena' which is consoling; more often they express an examplary stoicism. The mushrooms in 'A Disused Shed in Co Wexford', his masterpiece, are an obvious case in point. But the value of their 'patience and silence' is also emphasised by – among other things – pebbles, dust, a sheep's skull and discarded tins. The latter are especially articulate:

Deprived of use, we are safe now
from the historical nightmare
and may give our attention at last
to things of the spirit.

Such objects are able to get the best of this world and whatever might supersede it – like all his unlikely survivors they embody the resilient innocence upon which hope for the future depends.

Alan Hollinghurst

Rambunctious?

Appalachee Red by RAYMOND ANDREWS *Melbourne House* £5.50
The Cotton-Pickers by B. TRAVEN *Allison & Busby* £5.50
The Trackers by B. WONGAR *Melbourne House* £4.50
Ah Pook is Here & Other Texts by WILLIAM BURROUGHS *Calder* £5.95
The Subway to New York by PHILIP CALLOW *Martin Brian & O'Keeffe* £5.95

Appalachee Red is Raymond Andrews's first novel, and the first winner of the James Baldwin Prize for fiction. This is a good, exciting and incensing tale but the monotony of the tone may well fail to hold the children from play and old men from the chimney corner. The blurb describes it as a 'rambunctious saga', but in view of the quantity of background information and social history which Andrews quite justifiably wants to show us, I doubt if the 'saga' is really the mode for rambunctiousness. There is an excess of scene-setting, though the detailed topographical descriptions of the Georgia town of Appalachee do create an impression of laborious veracity; and the establishing of local myths among the blacks could have been done more economically – there is no direct speech, for instance, in the first 50 pages.

Even so the story of the 'Red Nigger' son of a white landowner and his black housemaid, his rise to power and wealth against a background of repressions and violence, is in a way compelling, in its slow rhythmic accumulation. The legendary aura of some of the characters, especially the sadistic Sheriff 'Boots' White, has the convincing resonance of folk memory. The novel is also intermittently sexy and comic, and one of its great merits is that the barbaric injustices and cruelty it describes are contained within its ironic tone rather than promoting a more strenuous rhetoric of protest or exhortation such as one finds for instance in James Baldwin's new novel.

The Cotton-Pickers similarly attempts a half-comic irony in its treatment of hardship, in this case that of Mexican workers in the early Twenties. This is Rose Lujan's 1969 translation of Traven's *Die Baumwollpflücker* of 1926 – and it reads at times rather oddly: 'Get going before I get seriously rough with you,' a policeman warns an unfortunate Indian at one point. The cool narration of the itinerant Wobbly Gerard Gales and his attitudes to his experience in and out of work amongst other lumpenproletarians are quite effective, suggesting a shared intelligence with his readers, though Traven's anarchist position (which led to the banning of his books by the Nazis) may seem a little unimpressive in this sketchy novel, the author's first.

Traven's identity has of course been the subject of a huge amount of speculation – and I imagine that of Birimbir Wongar may well become another. His publishers incline to the view that he is, as he claims to be, an Australian Aboriginal, though his previous collection of stories *The Track to Bralgu* aroused much disbelief about this. *The Trackers* is extremely short and suffer, far more than *The Cotton-Pickers* from brevity and consequent under-realisation. Wongar uses the emotive, though not entirely original, device of a change of colour to turn a Chinese architect, whose dream is to link Asia to Australia with a bridge, into an outlaw who comes upon and seeks fraternity with the Aboriginals. From this vantage-point he reveals the appalling exploitation and suppression of this ancient people by the mining greed of the whites. The subject is very serious, but the merely notational way in which he deploys his material makes the treatment insufficient rather than tellingly spare or nightmarishly condensed. Whether or not Wonger is a hoax, he has a vivid imagination, which requires a wider canvas.

Something old, something new from Burroughs. The new, in this collection of three 'Texts' comes in the form of 'The Book of Breeething', (sic) in which semantic worries about the accuracy of language lead him to replace the written text with a series of little drawings (by Bob Gale) in which stylised hieroglyphics are incorporated into stylised interiors and landscapes. The meaning of the glyphs can be read from a chart at the beginning – and the book incorporates a treatment of the Curse of King Tut.

The title piece (here published for the first time; the others have previously appeared in American publications) was originally intended to combine a written text with 'artwork' based on Mayan codices, but in this case it was the pictorial element which was dropped – on account of cost it would seem. The novel, as it stands, deals with an American man's attempt to achieve immortality through use of Mayan 'books of the dead', Ah Pook being the Mayan god of death. The third piece, 'Electronic Revolution', is a further fantastic exploration of the possibilities of control through media, viruses, fear and death. Interesting and morally serious as these investigations of hate and inhumanity are, Burroughs' manner in 'Ah Pook is Here' is monotonously familiar.

The prolific Philip Callow writes extremely well: his language has a poetical concision and his descriptions of people and scenes, often mundane and domestic, are uncannily accurate. It seems a pity that this visual and evocative talent is put to the service of such unenlightened material. Callow's novel exposes the potentially dangerous margin between first-person narration and egoism, which seems the more distasteful when presented indirectly through other characters. As his Jacob Raby says: 'I can't do without women, write about little else', but Mr Callow can write about them more sympathetically than this and has done so in other novels of some intensity.

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November Books

The following is a selection of books published during November and received by the NEW STATESMAN. Inclusion in this list does not preclude the possibility of a future review.

Art, Architecture and Design

JAMES BECK **Leonardo's Rules of Painting** *Phaidon* £4.95. 'An unconventional approach to modern art', fully illustrated.

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH **The Cultural Calendar of the Twentieth Century** *Phaidon* £10.95. A year-by-year illustrated chronicle of changing fashions.

JOHN READ **Portrait of an Artist: Henry Moore** *Whizzard/Deutsch* £4.95. A thoroughly illustrated biography-cum-work-study.

LELAND M. ROTH **A Concise History of American Architecture** *Harper & Row* £11.95. Over 300 illustrations with text covering major developments from the 17th century to the present.

GABRIEL WHITE **Edward Ardizzone** *Bodley Head* £12.50. Nearly 300 reproductions of Ardizzone's work, mostly black-and-white, with commentary.

Autobiography and Biography

HOWARD KOCH **As Time Goes By** *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich* £5.95. Memoirs of a writer of Hollywood films.

JO LANGER **Convictions** *Deutsch* £5.50. 'Memories of a life shared with a good Communist' in Czechoslovakia.

YITZHAK RABIN **The Rabin Memoirs** *Weidenfeld* £10. The memoirs of Israel's former Chief of Staff, Ambassador in Washington and Prime Minister.

JEAN RHYS **Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography** *Deutsch* £4.95. Takes her life story up to the time when she left Dominica for school in England.

ROBERT WISTRICH **Trotsky: Fate of a Revolutionary** *Robson Books* £7.50. A reflective, fully annotated biography.

Drama, Cinema and Music

I. A. COPLEY **The Music of Peter Warlock** *Dennis Dobson* £9.95. A critical survey.

E. L. DOCTOROW **Drinks Before Dinner** *Macmillan* £3.95. The first play by the author of *Ragtime*.

BRIAN FRIEL **Volunteers** *Faber* £2.95. Play first performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1975.

CHRIS GODDARD **Jazz Away from Home** *Paddington* £7.50. The story of early jazz in Europe, illustrated.

PAUL GRIFFITHS **A Guide to Electronic Music** *Thames & Hudson* £4.95. A relatively non-technical coverage of electronic music from the earliest experiments to the present, with bibliography, glossary and list of recordings.

DAVID POWNALL **Motocar** and **Richard III Part Two** *Faber* £3.95. Plays: one set in a mental hospital in Rhodesia; the other concerning events of 1484, 1948 and 1984.

WILLIAM WOLF with LILLIAN KRAMER WOLF **Landmark Films** *Paddington* £6.95. A year-by-year survey from 1914 to 1975.

Fiction

BERYL BAINBRIDGE **Another Part of the Wood** *Duckworth* £4.95. A re-working of an early novel.

RACHEL BILLINGTON **A Woman's Age** *Hamish Hamilton* £6.95. A novel spanning the 70 years from 1905 to 1975.

JOHN CHEEVER **The Wapshot Chronicle** and **The Wapshot Scandal** *Harper & Row* £6.95. His two classic novels about a New England family re-issued in one volume.

PAULA NEUSS **All Girls Together** *Duckworth* £5.95. A first novel.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON **Pilgrimage** *Virago* £3.50 per vol. The 13 novels about Miriam Henderson, which have been called the first 'stream conconsciousness' writing in English, are here re-issued in four volumes.

History

GEOFFREY BARRACLOUGH **Turning Points in World History** *Thames & Hudson* £4.50. A re-appraisal of the moral and political influence of Europe in world affairs.

CARLO M. CIPOLLA **Faith, Reason and the Plague** *Harvester* £8.50. A story of 17th-century Tuscany.

ISABEL & DAVID CROOK **Mass Movement in a Chinese Village: Ten Mile Inn** *Routledge* £6.95. The third volume of their long-term study of a Chinese village, describing a campaign of the Forties to implement the Agrarian Law.

ROBERT H. DAVIES **Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960** *Harvester* £18.50. 'An historical materialist analysis of class formation and class relations.'

IAN GIBSON **The Assassination of Frederico Garcia Lorca** *W. H. Allen* £7.95. A detailed examination of the circumstances of Lorca's murder in 1936 at the age of 38.

MARK JENKINS **Bevanism: Labour's High Tide** *Spokesman Books* £12.50. A thorough account of the Bevanite movement in the Forties and Fifties.

HUGH THOMAS **An Unfinished History of the World** *Hamish Hamilton* £12.50. A thematic study moving from the age of agriculture through the Renaissance and the industrial era to the political problems of the present.

FRANCES A. YATES **The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age** *Routledge* £7.75. Centres on the history of the Christian cabbala and the influence of occult philosophy on Elizabethan writers.

Literary Criticism

MARY EAGLETON & DAVID PIERCE **Attitudes to Class in the English Novel from Walter Scott to David Storey** *Thames & Hudson* £8.95. A brief, succinct study.

J. R. HAMMOND **An H. G. Wells Companion** *Macmillan* £12. A study of all his full-length works with bibliography and key to characters and locations.

FREDERIC JAMESON **Fables of Aggression** *University of California* £7.25. 'Wyndham Lewis the Modernist as Fascist.'

A. L. ROWSE **Portraits and Views Literary and Historical** *Macmillan* £15. Collected essays on history and literature.

THOMAS F. STALEY **Jean Rhys: A Critical Study** *Macmillan* £10. The first comprehensive study of her work.

PATRICIA STUBBS **Women and Fiction** *Harvester* £9.95. Feminism and the novel 1880-1920.

Poetry

PATRIC DICKINSON **Our Living John** *Chatto* £3. The latest collection from the author of *More Than Time* and *The Bearing Beast*.

W. S. GRAHAM **Collected Poems 1942-1977** *Faber* £8.50 & £3.95. His own selection from his poetry of these 25 years.

MICHAEL LONGLEY **The Echo Gate** *Secker* £3. His fourth collection; the Poetry Book Society choice for Christmas 1979.

Politics and Current Affairs

PAUL BEW, PETER GIBBON & HENRY PATTERSON **The State of Northern Ireland 1921-72** *Manchester* £8.50. A study of the development of political forces and social classes.

ANDREW BOYLE **The Climate of Treason** *Hutchinson* £8.95. Five who spied, or may have spied, for Russia.

FRANK BURTON & PAT CARLEN **Official Discourse** *Routledge* £7.50. 'On discourse analysis, government publications, ideology and the state.'

NOAM CHOMSKY & EDWARD S. HERMAN **The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism** *Spokesman Books* £12.50 & £3.50. Volume I in a series on the political economy of human rights.

J. DAVIDSON **Indo-China; Signposts in the Storm** *Longman* £4.95. An annotated background for students of events in Indo-China over the last 30 years.

JOEL DREYFUSS & CHARLES LAWRENCE III **The Bakke Case** *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich* £5.80. An examination of 'the politics of inequality'.

JOZEF GARLINSKI **Intercept: Secrets of the Enigma War** *Dent* £7.95. A detailed account of the breaking of the Enigma code.

JOHN LAFFIN **The Israeli Mind** *Cassell* £5.95. An analysis of 'one of the world's most intriguing peoples'.

G. L. LANNING with M. MUELLER **Africa Undermined** *Penguin* £3.50. A history of the mining companies and the underdevelopment of Africa.

CHANTAL MOUFFE (Ed.) **Gramsci and Marxist Theory** *Routledge* £9.50 & £5.95. A selection of scholarly essays on Gramsci's ideas.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM **The Grand Titration** *Allen & Unwin* £3.95. Science and society in East and West.

MARK POSTER **Sartre's Marxism** *Pluto* £2.95. Analysis of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

GORDON SMITH **Democracy in Western Germany** *Heinemann Educational* £8.50 & £4.95. Parties and politics in the Federal Republic.

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE **Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Weapon Proliferation** £14.

STROBE TALBOTT **Endgame** *Harper & Row* £7.50. 'The inside story of SALT II.'

Social Questions and Philosophy

RICHARD DE LONE **Small Futures: Children, Inequality and the Limits of Liberal Reform** *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich* £8.40. How the liberal tradition has failed to deal with the real problems of poor children.

ROBERT DENOON CUMMING **Starting Point** *University of Chicago* £21. An analysis of the characteristics of a dialectical method.

MARY DALY **Gyn/Ecology** *The Women's Press* £8.95 & £3.95. 'The metaethics of radical feminism.'

MARGRIT EICHLER **The Double Standard** *Croom Helm* £8.50 & £3.95. 'A feminist critique of feminist social science.'

ISRAEL SCHEFFLER **Beyond the Letter** *Routledge* £8.50. 'A philosophical inquiry into ambiguity, vagueness and metaphor in language.'

HARRIET SARNOFF SCHIFF **The Bereaved Parent** *Souvenir* £4.95. The author, herself a bereaved parent, deals with both practical and emotional problems.

N. NORMAN SHNEIDMAN **The Soviet Road to Olympus** *Routledge* £6.95 & £3.50. The theory and practice of Soviet physical culture and sport.

C. D. THROSBY & G. A. SWITHERS **The Economics of the Performing Arts** *Edward Arnold* £17.50. A detailed, tabulated study.

Miscellaneous

MARGARET BODEN **Piaget** *Harvester* £8.50. An introduction to Piaget's theories of development, with a look at his influence.

NEAL C. GILLESPIE **Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation** *University of Chicago* £9.90. A re-examination of the relationships between Darwin, his evolutionary theories and his religious beliefs as well as the beliefs of others.

E. H. GOMBRICH **Ideals and Idols** *Phaidon* £9.95. The fifth volume of the author's collected essays, on values in history and in art.

JOHN D. ROSENBERG (Ed.) **The Genius of John Ruskin** *Routledge* £9.95. Selected writings.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Michael Kustow

Le Merveilleux

It's Saturday morning at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, seed-bed of generations of French left-wing intellectuals. I've come to Paris with a pair of British actors for a week-long session of talks, rehearsals, *débats* and *interventions* called *Les Journées Shakespeare*. We've performed and dismantled scenes from *Measure for Measure*, then listened to French academics trying to make out that Shakespeare's Isabella is some kind of perverse sensualist out of Bataille or de Sade. Now Roger Planchon, playwright, director and head of the Théâtre National Populaire is lecturing on *Le Merveilleux dans Shakespeare*:

> When republican actors and directors of the French theatre of the 1840s staged Shakespeare's history plays, they were so wary of any speech in praise of monarchy that they cut the plays to ribbons. Just so today, the left-wing vanguard of our theatre is embarrassed by Shakespeare's last plays; why all these ghosts, gods and goddesses, unnatural tempests and unlikely coincidences, why this naive belief in the supernatural and *le merveilleux*? The fairy-tale quality of Shakespeare's late plays troubles us; didn't Brecht proclaim us 'children of a scientific age'? And yet I believe that in Shakespeare's commitment to *le merveilleux* – the secret other face of our real world, coming and going in ways we cannot control – lies not only the key to his entire work, but clues towards a kind of play which could transcend the psychologising or moralising in which so much playwriting today is bogged down.

Planchon plunges into the un-Cartesian disorder of Shakespeare's late theatre poetry with the fervour of an Artaud retrieving Jacobean drama for the French stage. In his current production of *No Man's Land*, Planchon uses violent and mysterious stage imagery to embody Pinter's poetic images. The action takes place in a naked room with walls that are literally sky blue, gigantic black furniture and a floor lit with neon from below like a nightclub stage. It has the oddity and chilling emptiness of a Magritte room. When the curtains of its one window are drawn, a forest clearing is revealed, but it's like a silkscreened photograph in a hyper-realist painting, its colour bled out. Planchon's using the language of modern painting to embody the Pinteresque sense of desolation, of experience you can't rely on. At the end, the icy cadence of Pinter's grimmest play, Planchon pulls off a great *coup de théâtre*. The walls of the blue room are suddenly blown out, and mountains of empty champagne bottles cascade around the four inhabitants of the room, frozen as they drink. It's an authentic, and earned, *frisson*.

Planchon's exuberant direction, deftly choreographing his actors in a constantly transformed space, focussing to stillness for the frequent lyric moments, keeping realistic activity going even as the innermost questions are being formulated, creating elegant B-movie menace for the two younger characters and a frenzied final chorus of toasts as the inhabitants of the room drink themselves into their black chairs, has an extravert and jubilant humanity. Michel Bouquet as Spooner is particularly fine. He lopes about like some Don Quixote of the little literary magazines. You believe in him as a man devoured by poetry's flame, perhaps even more than was the case with Gielgud. Planchon's Pinter has more *grand guignol* in it than Peter Hall's; but it's a coherent and convincing response to a troubling play.

Planchon's painterly staging is indebted to Robert Wilson, an American painter turned theatre-director whose dream-like phantasmagorias Paris has taken to her heart for the past five years. When *Deafman's Glance* first appeared in Paris, it was hailed by Louis Aragon as the return of true magic to the stage. His latest 'opera', *Edison*, has similar qualities to his earlier work: a curious non-narrative unfolding of time which gives every event or sign on stage a vivid pictorial presence, as arresting as Malevich's *White on White*; a formal articulation of space, with visual echoes and disorienting choreography; the mingling of abstract forms (memorably in *Edison*, where a black and a white boxer spar slowly) with nursery and pop-art imagery; a continuum of sound built from contrapuntal cut-up dialogue, electronically-treated actors' voices, and repetitive music. 'Opera' is an accurate description of Wilson's pieces: there may not be much singing, but they have opera's formal, sense-invading and hallucinatory power. And they're always anchored in the same sources: a radical unease at existing in one's skin and in the world, and very personal free associations with our culture heroes.

Wilson presents a portrait of Edison not just as inventor of the light-bulb, but also as American pioneer (Washington and Lafayette glide through the action) and more generally as seeker. Though *Edison* often comes too close to a formal play to sustain the strange beauty of its visionary passages, these are memorable: a laboratory crammed with glistening flasks and retorts suddenly opening into a planetary sky, a *trompe l'oeil* backcloth of the Paris Opera with a constellation of chandeliers outlining gowned and top-hatted couples, a projected image of the Statue of Liberty slowly fading against a white clapboard house and tree silhouettes at sunset. At his best, which is about half of *Edison*, Wilson still manufactures *le merveilleux* on the stage like no-one else today.

With *The Conference of the Birds*, Peter Brook has found a vehicle perfectly adjusted to the strengths of his international actors' group. Based on a 12th-century Persian wisdom poem, it's an allegory of human life as a journey across a desert by a group of birds in search of their king, the Simorgh. Manipulating exquisite hand puppets which evoke rather than imitate falcon, dove, sparrow, heron and hoopoe, Brook's company delicately trace their way through the stages of spiritual progression, exploring knots and puzzles in pocket-sized fables played out with Balinese masks, like dramatised illuminations in an old manuscript. The performance is childlike, sometimes of searing intensity, and has a confident freedom which comes from the shared experience under every conceivable performance condition of these French, English, Lebanese, African, American and Japanese actors over the past eight years. It conquered one of the theatre's toughest and most rewarding audiences: a Saturday matinee largely made up of children.

The Conference of the Birds is both naive – with the resonant simplicity of parables, the primary power of the spiritual wisdom which has interested Brook for years and sophisticated: Brook, in his richest production since *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Marat/Sade*, draws forth Beckettian echoes from an episode about a lone heron in the desert, and Freudian undertones as a necklace of gold coins is extracted from a possessive man's anus. What gives the work its conviction and for the most part saves it from ecumenical piety is the sense that its insights have been honed on the concrete challenge of the group's theatre work, with all its necessary blind alleys, delusory breakthroughs and quizzical victories. Brook's direction, the actors' free but measured playing, and the luminous text by Jean-Claude Carrière (Buñuel's scenario-writer) are continually aware of paradox, the humour within seriousness, the often spurious certainty of discoveries and fresh resolutions.

This alertness ensures that as the piece approaches its climax with images of the reborn phoenix and Brook's favourite fable of the butterfly who flies into the candleflame ('He learned what he wanted to know. But now he's the only one who knows it'), we are drawn into hard-won affirmations that have theatrical as well as spiritual validity:

> 'They opened the doors to them,' says the hoopoe narrator-bird. 'They drew a hundred more curtains. The most intense light shone out. They finally looked upon the Simorgh, and they saw that the Simorgh was themselves – and that they were the Simorgh . . . Unable to understand, they questioned the Simorgh, without using language. And the Simorgh answered them, also without using language: 'The sun of my majesty is a mirror. Whoever looks into this mirror sees his own soul and his body. He sees himself complete.' Then the birds lost themselves forever in the Simorgh. The shadow melted into the sun, and that was all. The path remains open, but from now on there is neither guide nor traveller.

If I have any criticism of a performance which is finally almost exalting, it's that *The Conference of the Birds* isn't really a play, and its lack of innate theatrical structure, of the rigour which comes only from a writer's imagination, means that it occasionally comes close to being a sort of spiritual panto. It may be that the best of Brook's work with this group is yet to come. He has reproached most contemporary playwrights with the lack of a truly 'volcanic' gaze on today's world – a criticism not dissimilar to Planchon's dissatisfaction with psychology and agitprop. How exciting it would be if Brook could now yoke a real playwright to his search for a transfiguring drama!

Correction

In Pierre Joris's article last week, 'Prize Fights', the title of Rachid Boudjedra's novel should have read *The 1001 Years of Nostalgia*, not *The 100 Years of Nostalgia*.

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Opera Records

Peter Conrad

Mercurial Energy

Hearteningly, the notable records of the season are all of 20th-century operas, with the first complete *Lulu* (DGG £18.50) foremost among them. Those critics who flocked to the Paris première in February disliked Chéreau's chilly marmoreal production and the emphasis placed by Boulez on the absolute forms which plot the music – the fugal spat between Lulu and the painter, the implacable single rhythm with which Schön breaks down the painter, the moralistic symmetries and palindromes of the structure – rather than on its grieving human emotions. Both men defend themselves skilfully in the booklet accompanying the set.

Chéreau denies that Lulu is a castrating vamp. He sees her as a victim: people plead with her to destroy them, and in catering to their discontents it's herself she's destroying. Chéreau insists on her wisdom and her unsparing honesty. In Paris, Teresa Stratas agonised over her inability to sing Lulu's vertiginous music as beautifully as she wished, but she serves Chéreau's dramatic purpose brilliantly, suggesting the character's fragility – surprised by Goll, she resorts to childish whimpering – and her mournful commiseration with her suicidal men. 'Er hat es überstanden', she murmurs tenderly of Schön, whom she's just murdered. This *Lulu* is a compulsory purchase.

A sempiternal woman to rival Lulu is Marty in Janaček's *Makropulos Case* (Decca £11). Chéreau's Lulu is a weak, pitiful creature mythologised by the men who crave her, turned by their fears into an unfeeling archetype. Marty, kept alive by chemistry, already has this superhuman status but renounces it, reconciling herself to her mortality. Elisabeth Söderström's voice may be tired, but as Marty she uses it with infinite resource, always finding an inflection to convey mood and the ambiguity of facial expression. With Kolenaty she's irritable, with the men she manipulates she's serpentine, with Hauk girlish, and when left to her own memories she's suddenly affectionate – yet all this mercurial energy lapses into exhaustion, and singing gives way to yawns and blissful snoring. Söderström is equal to all these transformations, and her final scene – Marty's change from drunken hilarity, fuelling herself with swigs of whisky, to despair and supplication – is stunningly performed.

Die Ägyptische Helena (Decca £15.75) is one of the least successful of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal collaborations. The music is slushily grandiose, and the text vacillates between myth and parodic operetta. Helena herself dodges from the fatality of Isolde to the opportunism of the Marschallin, gratefully obscuring a past which incriminates her. The potion she offers to Menelaus guarantees not death but a convenient amnesia; as the opera ends, they return to reality rather than willing themselves, like their Wagnerian prototypes, into oblivion. Antal Dorati and the Detroit Symphony treat this curiosity handsomely, and its voice-slaughtering principal roles have been cast as well as could nowadays be expected. Helena is Gwyneth Jones. She's an ecstatic singer, who lives by taking risks: there are sunbursts of power when her voice opens up, but also occasional shrieks and a ricocheting wobble. Nevertheless, the impression generally is of irresistible boldness and radiance. Matti Kastu bawls bravely as her unhinged consort – but why did Strauss so detest tenors, and punish them with such taxing and unflattering music?

Bartok called *Bluebeard's Castle* (DGG £5.06) an opera, but it defies the stage, since drama and scenic description have been banished to the orchestra, here finely managed by Wolfgang Sawallisch. The work is a psychotic *Lohengrin*, about characters preying mentally on one another, and the luxurious images of the text are symbols of their feelings, not stage ornaments. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau has chosen some sinister works to record with his latest young wife, Julia Varady. She was Cordelia to his Lear in Reimann's opera; now she is the consort he immures in his castle of elderly, mistrustful fantasy. The steely purity of Varady's tone is exactly right for Judith's driving, destructive innocence, but Fischer-Dieskau himself overacts vocally: there is too much gruff barking, and too much conscientious rolling of r's.

Like *Bluebeard*, Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* (Philips £9.59) is classifiable neither as opera nor as oratorio. It begins, in the doomed affair between Tove and Waldemar, as a recension of *Tristan*, and yet goes on to sublimate tragedy into a pantheistic comedy. The new live recording from Boston is the best version yet of this wonderful hybrid. Seiji Ozawa perfectly controls its graduation from lyrical calm to heroic thunder and beyond to chattering speech-song and choral celebration. I heard one of his performances with the present cast in New York earlier this year, and suspect that James McCracken's Waldemar has had some weight and heft added to it by the knob-twiddlers in the controlroom, but Jessye Norman (Tove) and Tatiana Troyanos (the elegiac wood-dove, a sort of ornithological Brangäne) don't need electronic assistance: both are superb.

Among the repertory operas, the most easily commendable is Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* (CBS £7.99). This is Wagner for children: his mythology is diminished to a fairy-tale, his monsters to infantile bogeys, his gods to protective parents. As the young 'oral regressives' (for this is how Bruno Bettelheim diagnoses their gingerbread-guzzling in an essay for the booklet), Frederica von Stade and Ileana Cotrubas are never artful or cloying. Christa Ludwig as their mother is a raddled, nagging Fricka. The witch with her appetitive war-whoops is a cannibalistic Walküre: Elisabeth Söderström cackles uncannily, and licks her lips with gruesome relish.

Faust (EMI £21) is patchily successful. Placido Domingo's beefy, forceful voice hardly suits the intellectual hero. His speciality is impulsive animal spirits, and luckily for him Gounod soon converts Goethe's character into a blithe hedonist. Still, the high C Domingo emits in the garden scene is more a call to arms than an anticipatory erotic swoon. Though Mirella Freni understands Marguérite – listen to the way she allows wayward sensual dreams to interrupt her ballad – she too has vocally outgrown the role, and her spinning-wheel song sounds furious not wistful. Best is Nicolai Ghiaurov's sardonic, carboniferous devil, not the enemy of God but a dapper worldling and Faust's colleague in rakery. Domingo too is less than ideal in Saint-Saens's *Samson et Dalila* (DGG £15.17). He knows about the character's lust and bellicosity, but not about the intensity of religious devotion Vickers finds in the part. Nor is the visceral, vengeful Elena Obraztsova a seductress: her voice keens like a wind off the steppes, savagely exotic and thrilling, but wrong for the part. The set commends itself for Barenboim's conducting. Perhaps he is indulgent and over-expansive, but at least he rescues the work from the imputation that it's no more than stodgy oratorio.

Finally, two Verdi operas. In *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Philips £12.79) Caballé is seraphic when her mind is on the job but more often she's husky and listless, and Ingvar Wixell's voice is too orotund and jovial for the cold politician he plays, but the enchantingly boyish Riccardo of José Carreras rescues the enterprise. His voice trembles with ardour, joy and reckless humour: he *is* this genially foolhardy, emotionally irresponsible prince.

Don Carlos (EMI £21) memorialises Karajan's grim Salzburg production with its acres of wrought iron, its claustral gloom, and its fascist auto-da-fé. The megalomania of the musical scheme – the brazen might of the orchestra stamps out the hero's introduction of himself – is mitigated by the singers: Freni's sad, compassionate Elisabetta, Carreras's helpless, un-neurotic Carlos, the vivacious Eboli of Agnes Baltsa, Ghiaurov's baleful, wounded Philip. From Karajan there are the inevitable perversities. The first trio in the garden, for instance, is dampened and decelerated, turned into a triple soliloquy not a slanging match – exquisite but unexciting. However, there are also more instrumental revelations than can be counted: the affectionate understatement of the friendship duet, the stabbing strings which transcribe Carlos's panic and the distracted harp rhapsody when he faints, the instant contrast between the battering sonority of the cloister scene and the glinting orchestration of the flirtatious chorus which follows, introducing Eboli's song. Giulini's recording of the Paris version, also on EMI, is more heart-tuggingly perceptive about the characters, but Karajan's performance has its own interpretive integrity and a fanatical unity.

Double Christmas Number

In next week's issue: Thomas Elsaesser on the German film industry; David Benedictus on censorship in Britain today; David Mercer on a nasty experience with Israeli Television; short stories about contemporary Ireland and Zimbabwe by Desmond Hogan and S. Nyanfukudza; Julian Barnes on the year's television; Benedict Nightingale on the theatre of the decade.

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Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Lurid Hubbub

The Primary English Class by ISRAEL HOROWITZ *Orange Tree, Richmond*
Flaming Bodies by SNOO WILSON *ICA*
Le Cirque Imaginaire *Riverside*

Britain has heard little of Israel Horowitz since his *Indian Wants the Bronx* passed through customs ten years ago; and, if *The Primary English Class* is representative of his recent work, the loss would seem supportable. What he wrote in blood then has been retouched in purple greasepaint. The subject is the same, American insularity and xenophobia; but the confrontation of native with immigrant no longer leads to violence and mutilation – remember Mr Horowitz's bewildered Asiatic, his hand half-severed, repeating the only English he knows, 'How are you? You're welcome. Thank you!'? Instead, we have a neurotic lady teacher slapping the palms and confiscating the property of five foreigners who fail to understand either her or each other. English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese: an orgy of non-communication, set at the top of one of New York's concrete Babels, and interpreted for us by a translator at the other end of the Orange Tree's p-a system.

Alan Bennett's spoof sermon in *Beyond the Fringe* is, they tell me, still used at seminaries as an example of how not to preach: Auriol Smith's frantic schoolmarm, with her ill-considered lesson-plans, her habit of scribbling incomprehensibly on the blackboard and bawling obscurely at the class, her stupidity, impatience and appalling self-absorption, might be similarly useful at teachers' training college. The play is at times very funny; but too often in too easy and obvious a way. Insults and racial slurs fly, but are not understood. English is laboriously and drolly mispronounced. The German, deprived of his specs, makes desperate, misinterpreted lunges at the teacher's breasts. A Polish janitor, mistaken by her for a sex-maniac, is locked in the ladies' loo, and then bursts furiously into the classroom, adding to the linguistic cacophony.

I can hardly complain about the broadness of the humour, because the play claims to be no more than a farce, and Horowitz himself has recently gone so far as to declare that 'all my plays are flawed, none are to be taken seriously'. Yet I can't help sensing something disingenuous in that self-abuse, some potential not quite fulfilled by *The Primary English Class* itself. It is a series of jokes which constantly promises to break through the sound-barrier into allegory or parable, but remains, to everyone's frustration, no more than a series of jokes.

Flaming Bodies has its farcical moments too, many of them couched in the gaudy-gothic style which has made Snoo Wilson something of a cult; but it also has considerably more bite. A podgy Lesbian, aggressively personated by Miriam Margolyes, haunts the office of the movie entrepreneur who has, she claims, stolen from her a scenario about a female Christ. So far, so clear; but before long a secretary has disappeared over the balcony in a puff of smoke, a stuntman has driven his garish auto through the window, a fridge has been transmuted into a space rocket, the ghost of Ms Margolyes's father has materialised, the ashes of her mother have been stickily devoured, and all is hectic imagery and lurid hubbub.

What we're visiting, it seems, is the free-associating brainbox of a paranoid schizophrenic, itself an amalgam of amusement arcade, chamber of horrors and junkyard, an internal jungle parallel to and no doubt created by the civilised jungle beyond.

It's a trip which mercifully few of us have made in reality, and hence rather hard to judge by orthodox criteria. On the one hand, the invention seems a bit arbitrary at times, some of the effects self-conscious, the tone a trifle facetious; on the other, Wilson's derring-do imagination visibly carried the audience with it, teasing, disorienting, amusing, and finally sobering. John Ashford directs, resourcefully.

The point of the modest cavortings at Riverside is presumably to demonstrate that the essence of *cirque* is not size and swank. Instead of elephants and lions, we get a perplexed goose and somnolent rabbit; instead of a quorum of clowns, Jean Baptiste Thierrée with a suitcase, blowing bubbles and popping them with a hammer, miming tiny sagas with the help of paper fish, and winkingly exposing the tricks of the conjuror's trade; and instead of acrobatics aloft, Victoria Chaplin skipping, dancing, knees-bending on a low wire, and finally hanging from it like a bat asleep.

The show can veer perilously near the cute and winsome, and occasionally begins to resemble something improvised by bored children on a rainy afternoon. At such times I found myself hankering for rather more big-top vulgarity and rather less *'imaginaire'*, whatever that means.

Yet there are also moments of professional excellence and authentic wonder, notably when Ms Chaplin spins and twists a series of coloured fans, transforming herself into a Spanish dancer, a flower, an exotic bird, anything, everything. There can't be a ringmaster living, or dead, who wouldn't be proud of such an act.

Ruth Fainlight

A Poem

There's a patched-up, incongruous neatness about his appearance
like a mongol child who's just had his collar buttoned and straightened
and a careless flannel rubbed across his face

Or the photo sent of a hostage, yesterday's newspaper
propped against his chest to prove he's still alive

Or that figure in the witness box, so pale and thin, who whatever
the consequence cannot control his grin –
happy to be out of the cellars, to see
other people after months of one ranting examiner –
though his smile reveals the missing teeth; soon
he'll start to say everything he was told, he'll reiterate

And the hostage's wary muffled voice, scratchily taped,
left at the pre-arranged place, will accuse all his colleagues

And the child will stumble over his age
and name, but somehow manage a poem.

Art

John Spurling

British Winners

Sir Thomas Lawrence *National Portrait Gallery at 15 Carlton House Terrace*
Sèvres *The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace*

The Second British Empire of the post-Waterloo era was created by a formidable combination of do-gooders and military daredevils. Wilberforce and Wellington were their respective tutelary geniuses and if the calm, sweet funeral reliefs of John Flaxman (recently shown at the RA) stand for the Wilberforce connection, then Sir Thomas Lawrence was pre-eminently the official portraitist of the Wellington strain. It is curious to compare Lawrence's half-length Duke with Goya's in the National Gallery. Both are portraits of a Winner, *the* Winner, red-coated, decorated with only the grandest orders, modestly haughty and taut with compressed energy; but Goya's is of a more dangerous kind of British winner, the wide blue eyes and small mouth expressive of righteous innocence, suggesting a man naively self-confident that any world he conquered would only be the better for it. Lawrence's is simply a romantic hero, the English officer's view of himself at his best: noble, youthful, proud, decisive and invincible.

With one notable exception, there is no element of doubt or complication in any of Lawrence's portraits. All are variations – though in a less demonic vein – of the early painting of *John Philip Kemble as Coriolanus*, a huge, black-cloaked figure with his right leg

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and shoulder thrust forward and his eyes burning a hole in the soft world beyond the canvas. These are the men, soldiers, statesmen, lords and bankers, who are not only fit but ready and willing to go forth and rule. Even John Allnutt, standing against the sky like a strung bow – one arm holding his silk-lined hat, the other laid masterfully over the neck of his obsequious horse – seems to be dominating at least a province. Yet he was only a wine-merchant. In one of the drawings we see him leaning over the back of a sofa to make a group with his wife and baby daughter. He still looks as if he had a couple of regiments waiting for him beyond the curtains at the back.

Lawrence's women are suitable associates for such chaps. The old ones are tough and overbearing, so many 19th-century Volumnias; the wives are either richly-dressed, dignified partners to a dinner or a ball or, occasionally, when their looks can sustain it, romantic *princesses lointaines* in dark or stormy settings. The children are treated exclusively as heirs – insufferable little prigs in velvet suits with their eyes turned upwards towards heaven or their destined place in the sun.

For all Lawrence's skill with facial likeness and with the texture of clothes and hangings, he is rather clumsy when it comes to portraying the body in a relaxed pose. People on chairs sometimes defeat him completely and he fails to give any sense of unity or shared life to a conversation piece such as the group of Sir Francis Baring, his brother and his son-in-law at work in their bank.

His approach to women and children is perhaps dictated as much by technical difficulties as by a Roman view of their place in the scheme of things. Then again, his best portraits of women seem to be his earliest ones – Queen Charlotte, the Countess of Derby and the Countess of Bathurst, all done before he was 23 – so it may be that he did come to see them less as individuals than as minor characters in a national epic.

The great exception in Lawrence's handsome, heroic, but largely mindless world – the critic of the *The Examiner* inexplicably wrote in 1827 that 'Sir Thomas always exhibits the mind' – is Pope Pius VII. After Napoleon's defeat, Lawrence was commissioned by the Prince Regent to paint several of the Allied leaders. Pius had excommunicated Napoleon and been taken prisoner by him. Perhaps because the Pope actually did rule the world after his fashion and because the action was by then all behind him, Lawrence was for once able to paint a face expressing knowledge, thought, experience, even contradictory emotions and a measure of duplicity, instead of mere will. But one suspects that the main advantage of the Pope over most of Lawrence's other subjects was that he was not an English gentleman.

To the end of his life, in spite of his success, Lawrence remained the little boy in his father's pub who was brought out to do remarkable likenesses of the visiting gentry. When he painted the ruler of his own world, the Prince Regent, Lawrence was not so unwise as to attempt subtleties. Deprived in this case of the outward-thrusting will, reluctant to probe for anything else, he settles for a heroic pose, a Byronic hairstyle, a virtuoso rendering of the ludicrously fancy costume and a gesture which, in the context, seems almost ironic (except that Sir Thomas was incapable of irony): the prince's right hand dangles out of its silver-plumed sleeve over the *Table des Capitaines*, commissioned by Napoleon from the Sèvres porcelain factory and painted with the heads of Alexander the Great and other commanders of antiquity.

This very table, presented to the Prince Regent by Louis XVIII in gratitude for hospitality received during his exile, is on view in the Queen's Gallery. It forms part of the finest collection of 18th-century Sèvres in the world, amassed by the Prince Regent after the collapse of the Ancien Régime. The exhibition also includes paintings (17th-century Dutch and 18th-century French), Gobelin tapestries and furniture, but its chief glory is the central case in which are displayed (one on each side) four dinner and dessert services of fairytale magnificence.

Even if you are indifferent to china, unsympathetic to the 18th century, a staunch Republican, appalled at the thought of working conditions in the Sèvres factory (owned by Louis XVI), you cannot stand coldly by these colours: borders of turquoise blue, dark blue or green enclosing panels of minutely painted flowers, fruit, birds, butterflies and mythological scenes. Perhaps nothing more perfectly sophisticated was ever made before or since, yet the colours are those of childhood, soft and pure, as if the world were seen for the first time, the first dew still on it. No wonder that, caught between his passion for Sèvres and his heraldic role as Captain of the victorious captains, Lawrence's Prinny looks more like a prince of ballet-dancers.

Television

Julian Barnes

Smoking Rats

In between the glitter-dusted trailer, the BBC's run-up to Christmas found room for sobering programmes about obesity and dying. *The Fat is in the Fire* (BBC-2) may have gained extra spectators as a result of one Sunday previewer's promise of shots of Himalayan cleavage; but if so, voyeurs were in for a surprise. For most of its length this Horizon film concentrated on rats being pampered with pork pies, Nutty Bars and Toblerone; rats paying for it by feeling the sharp end of a rectal thermometer; and finally, little bits of smoking rats which had been humanely incinerated in the cause of science. Martin Freeth's programme had a solid overall value, puncturing as it did the clumping moral assumption we automatically make — that fatties are being visibly punished for gluttony by getting fat – and reasserting the randomness of nature's handouts. But it was also one of those scientific shows where, though the central proposition is attractive and graspable – that obesity is not related to over-eating or under-exercising, but is regulated by the amount of adipose brown tissue we house – the proof of it is mazy and rat-centred, and the final practical application of the work is still another whole new research field away. The opening sequence featured a woman who had spent 22 resented years weighing 17 stone; a few hundred incinerated and rectally probed rats later, we returned to the same admirably stoical woman, who could now be comforted with the information that she herself wasn't doing anything wrong: she was just low on brown fat. That may have taken away the guilt, but it still left her just as fat as before; her doctor ended by predicting a good ten-year wait before he knew enough to go about starting to get her thin again.

A Time to Die (BBC-1) reported on the selfless work of St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, where terminal cases are cared for according to simple and admirable principles: that the dying should not be deceived, should not be in pain, and should not be alone. The film awed you with the commitment of those who worked here: a social worker who was just leaving estimated that two or three years was the maximum anyone could take of the high emotion involved. Quiet and largely undepressing, *A Time to Die* ended with the crass intrusion of a cocky American Jesuit on a three-month placement, who lectured the camera confidently about what he called 'the faith context' and 'the dying process'. He confessed his astonishment and 'disappointment' that the faith context doesn't become more popular as the dying process gets under way. From his manner, you'd have thought he was rebuking the dying for their sin against the light; what he didn't grasp, of course, was that they were tacitly rebuking him.

At the start of *Up a Gum Tree* (BBC-1), David Bellamy flopped noisily down among the blue-green algae of an intertidal zone on the deserted Western coast of Australia and prepared to confuse us about the simple plant communities which lay between him and the camera. The memory-ridden viewer, however, might have spotted in the background vestiges of an altogether more developed form of life. Wasn't that the fossilised footprint of the higher, crepe-soled Attenborough? Wasn't a specimen of the breed spotted less than a year ago, crouching down among these self-same blue-green algae? And that flutter of paper – a torn-up script for *Life on Earth*? At times like this you wonder if it wouldn't be cheaper for the BBC to keep camera crews permanently stationed beside the world's major natural phenomena, waiting like lighthousemen for the annual supplies visit from the latest house biologist.

After this memory-hiccup Bellamy concentrated, in the first of five Australian reports, on the hidden life of the desert, the ingenuity of the flora, and the delicate balance of nature. Whether this delicate balance will survive the pounding, leaping, doggy presence of Bellamy himself is another matter. Show him a koala bear up a tree and he will climb it so that we can compare their rival fluffy features. Show him a pool of water and the bearded buffoon will scare the plankton by landing bum-first in it from the nearest high rock. Show him a desert and, after saying something like, 'Now there's a desert if ever I saw one – enough to parch the pants off any true blue pom', he will demonstrate its solitude by running through it: alone, alone, all all alone, except for the shadow of the helicopter which is packed with his film crew. Where Attenborough's enthusiasm for the natural world is essentially subservient and awed, Bellamy's seems ludicrously competitive: the koala, the pool and the desert are all somehow his rivals for our attention. If only the desert were *more* of a desert, you con-

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clude, if only there weren't all this hidden life scurrying around, there wouldn't be such an unwholesome scrimmage going on in front of camera.

Most unexpected attempt to throw light on the Iranian crisis this week came on *Friday Night, Saturday Morning* (BBC-2). Hosted by William Rushton and otherwise given over to jokers and old mates and a punk-erotic dance combo, it opened with an interview with an Iranian student, whom Rushton interrogated in a mild, sympathetic, 'dashed if I know the answer to this stumper' sort of way. As the term 'Iranian student' tends to mean, in media terms, a gun-toting flag-burner who gives rabies to children for breakfast, it was useful to hear from someone soft-spoken, intelligent and lucid who at the same time was unequivocally bent on justice, or vengeance, or more than a bit of both. The calm pleasure with which he approved the execution of a former Prime Minister was chillingly instructive. At the end of the interview an extraordinary non-transition suddenly took us into Andy Williams singing his latest hit. Maybe it was meant as an ironic editorial comment on the distance between the warring civilisations; but I doubt it.

Films

John Coleman

A Tantrum, Mr Spock?

Star Trek — The Motion Picture (U) *Empire*
La Cage aux Folles (AA) *Gate, Notting Hill*
The Prisoner of Zenda (A) *Plaza*
The House on Garibaldi Street (A) *Classic, Haymarket*

'Trekkies', or devotees of the 79 episodes of a TV space series first transmitted into millions of American homes a decade ago and subsequently a compulsive alternative to homework over here, will need no urging to the big-screen frolic now before us: what's more, they will probably need no explanations. One hopes not, if only because the opening few minutes found me at a loss, with three mobile bits of space hardware – guided by snout-faced Klingons, whom I took to be the Enemy – swiftly blasted out of the air and out of the movie, never to reappear. Robert Wise's *Star Trek – The Motion Picture* reassembles the crew of the good ship Enterprise, a 23rd-century moral vehicle, right up to the pointy ears of the unemotional half-Vulcan genius Mr Spock (Leonard Nimoy).

Out of retirement come bland William Shatner as Captain Kirk, up-graded to Admiral, Dr 'Bones' McCoy (DeForest Kelly) and other familiars, key-explorers in the United Federation of Planets, every plastic sinew bent on saving Earth from something new and nasty wrapped in a vast cloud of unknowing. The Enterprise has just been refitted and Kirk resumes control of it (to the initial irritation of its new commander, Decker), chest swelling with pride as he looks round at this great new set, in the sure knowledge that some of a reported $40m. budget has gone on it and that Douglas Trumbull (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *2001*) and John Dykstra (*Star Wars* and *Battleship Galactica*) have teamed up for the special photographic effects. 'Ready or not, she launches in 12 hours,' says Kirk briskly and out of the giant, skeletonic drydock which is one of the most impressive indications of money seen to be spent emerges the artefact.

Things start going wrong from the outset. The Vulcanite science officer, old Spock's replacement, fails to materialise aboard in that circular thing; there are some scragged-looking light-silhouettes, a nasty yelp or two and a doomy voice from elsewhere' 'What we got back didn't live long, fortunately'. And one had thought this was going to be a family picture! Which is where Spock itself turns up again, at about the same time as something completely different: a new navigator from Delta Four, bald Ilia (Persis Khambatta), a personable young woman who has apparently had a previous space-fling with that temporarily demoted commander Decker (Stephen Collins). There is an eye-flicker between the two, but Ilia is primly reassuring – 'My oath of celibacy is on record, captain'. Nevertheless, thereby is to hang a fair portion of the plot.

It is a pity, perhaps, that Ilia's alopecia reinforces her likeness to a window-dresser's dummy, since people are supposed to count in the ensuing fable. In fact, human fallibility, particularly in the area of emotions, is made into rather an issue in the finals. On the way to that, there is ample time to observe the hardware and, frankly, we have been hereabouts and more excitingly before. The biggest offer is a *2001*-ish spasm of lunges down a kind of audio-visual throat, vagina or whatyouwill, as the Enterprise is part-sucked, part-propelled into the mysterious heart of the matter. Ilia is de-materialised at one point, to pop back as a programmed 'probe', geared to garnering information from Kirk and his team before disposing of them. 'Carbon-units,' she croakily calls them, and points out that 'the words recreation and enjoying have no meaning in my programming'.

One began to wonder if they had all that much in Paramount's. Yet the TV series is known for a certain tongue-in-cheek jocoseness, a heavy-lidded humour, and Harold Livingston's screenplay, drawn from Alan Dean Foster's story, contrives a redeeming foolishness, even roguishness, at the close. What threatened to veer into a fashionable surrogate religiosity picks up a hint from all that deep-throat plunging towards the super-power menacing our world 300 years on. The huge all-knowing threat is discovered to suffer from infantile curiosity: as all psychedelic hell breaks loose, 'Your child is having a tantrum, Mr Spock,' says Kirk. And the answer, to any innocents left in the auditorium, brings Ilia and Decker starrily together in a sort of comic copulation: *Son, lumière* and – *pas devant* – s-e-x.

Stop-press reports have this latest extra-terrestrial trip, nay, stumble, as having taken more in its first few days in the US than *Star Wars*, currently the top money-spinner of all time. Perhaps Jim Kirk should have the last word. The immediate problem of saving the Earth resolved, the crew ask for further orders: 'Heading, sir?' Kirk: 'Out there'. Then he smiles gently, gesturing ahead. 'Thataway'.

Edouard Molinaro's *La Cage aux Folles*, an adaptation from Jean Poiret's stage play, presents its own problems. The gay world, one is reliably informed, has found this good, funny, sympathetic; and who am I to take up the cudgels on behalf of a minority to which I do not belong? (There has been a vast black audience for blaxploitation flicks, to which I have similarly taken exception, as demeaning to blacks everywhere.) The sub-Feydeau plot here revolves round a homosexual couple, 'married' companionably for 20 years, Renato (splendid Ugo Tognazzi), manager of the St Tropez nightclub of the title, which features female impersonators, and Zaza (Michel Serrault), the club's star. Renato has a son, Laurent, result of an hour's aberration 20 years back, and the lad now proposes to get married. His girl's father is an ultra-respectable deputy, secretary of the Union for Moral Order. The presumptive fun is of the guess-who's-coming-to-dinner variety. How will Renato carry off meeting the in-laws-to-be? The odd couple rehearse, practising John Wayne walks and not pointing their little fingers.

There is, however, a moment of genuine pathos, when Zaza – uncomfortably attired in a conventional dark suit – tries to sit down, dispose of his limp-wristed hands like a conventional male; and there are one or two honest, unpatronising laughs, as when the girl's mother is briefly lumbered under a crucifix while the father stares short-sightedly at some naughty Grecian goings-on on the dinner plates. Elsewhere, a bludgeoning vulgarity and predictability reign, down to an inevitable gay priest at the wedding.

Peter Sellers and Peter Sellers in Richard Quine's leaden *The Prisoner of Zenda* are

Martin Amis

Point of View

Policemen look suspicious to normal
Murderers. To the mature paedophile
A child's incurious glance is a leer
Of intimate salacity; in more
Or less the same way, live people remain
As good as dead to active necrophiles.

It is often extra affectionate
To leave people you care about alone.
Anyone who has ever walked into
A lamp-post knows that all speeds above nought
Miles per hour are really pretty fast, thanks.

Some of us look at the sunset and can
See only blood in the vampiric sky.
I've got a clock that turns its back on me,
In disdain. A watch wouldn't dare do that.

If you don't feel a little mad sometimes
Then I think you must be out of your mind.
No one knows what to do. Cliches are true.
Everything depends on your point of view.

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even less amusing: this must be the mystery comedy of the dying year. As for the 'serious' *The House on Garibaldi Street*, directed by Peter Collinson at a snail's pace and based on the Israeli snatching of Eichmann from Buenos Aires, Steve Shagan's words fail everyone. I never thought to see actors like Martin Balsam and Alfred Burke reduced to amateur status.

Weekend Competition

No 2596 **Set by Peter Alexander**

On a flying visit to the USA recently, I picked up *Crosbie's Book of Punned Haiku*. The principle is simple: they should rhyme and contain at least one pun. For example:

To give you the gist
Of my fondest perversions
I sensualist.

They vary considerably in quality and, between ourselves, I think compers could do at least as well. Up to five tries each, by 4 January.

Result of No 2593 **Set by Basil Ransome-Davies**

We asked for straight-faced, naïve reviews of 'difficult' works.

Report **By Frank Shortstraw**

Many of you have written to ask what has happened to Spiro Keats. Wise, elusive Spiro, at the snap of whose potent fingers the entire Complex used to tremble – why, you inquire, have those fingers been silent of late? I shall tell you. During the recent disturbances, a strange shrieking noise was heard. We rushed to the penthouse, but it was too late: Spiro, sensing the end of his era, was, 'coptering through the muggy Holborn sky with loud cries of 'Byeeee!' He has now installed himself in St Pancras Hospital and is telling reporters that he is 'too ill to be moved'. Our lawyers will spare no efforts to have Spiro returned to Great Turnstile to answer for his many past wickednesses. In the meantime, a mere six pounds to each of the worthy winners this week, and Piles galore.

The Waste Land

What a delightful compendium of helpful information Mr Eliot has penned! Here is a work that amateur gardeners will read and re-read – and in poetry, too! I for one will never again make the foolish error of planting trees in a rockery: as he notes, 'what branches grow out of this stony rubbish?' Solace too, for those of us not gifted with green fingers: April is indeed 'the cruellest month'. The whole work is cheerily composed of little snippets, interspersed with some amusing portraits of kings and queens, into which one may readily dip. There are extensive notes – in the original Latin, sometimes, to mollify classical horticulturalists – and the foreigner is helpfully encouraged: some lines are written in his language. And what better way for junior geographers to learn the definition of desert: 'there is no water'. This line is sensibly repeated. Splendid stuff, despite careless typesetting (some lines only half-printed).

BILL GREENWELL

Crime and Punishment

This *roman policier* will have little appeal for lovers of the *genre*. Its main fault is the absence of suspense; the identity of the murderer is obvious from the beginning. Interest might have been sustained by a clear picture of the detective's efforts to piece together the clues that eventually lead to an arrest. Instead there is a duel of wits in which the murderer's foolish arrogance impels him, most irritatingly, to give quite gratuitous help to the police. Time-wasting complications concerning the murderer's sister, mother and friends do nothing to further the plot and the murderer's many introspections are merely irrelevant padding. The flow of the prose is impeded by the difficulty of pronouncing the names of the characters. The author would have profited from reading Rex Stout or Agatha Christie before attempting such a book.

PETER ALEXANDER

Finnegans Wake

I take this to be an Irish whodunnit, but it's so peppered with mistakes and misprints on every page that I still haven't a clue who killed Finnegan or what happened at his wake. The author must be heartbroken to see all the hours of work he has put into it turned into absolute nonsense by slipshod typesetters who seem to have had too many Guinnesses for lunch. I'm afraid it's just another illustration of falling standards in our educational system and general all-round slackness in society. I shall look forward to the next book from this promising author. Meantime, he'd better find himself a publisher who's a bit more careful of his P's and Q's!

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

The Trial

This new thriller, translated from the German, keeps the puzzled reader, from the first word to the last, in a state of bewildered suspense. An interlocking series of at first sight incoherent episodes finally leads to an unexpected denouncement, the precise nature of which it would be a pity to reveal. Suffice it to say that the plot, ending as it does, rather than beginning, with a mysterious corpse, is an ingenious variation on the classical *whodunit* theme – in effect, a *whodunwhat*. Fascinating and obviously authentic sidelights on Central European juridical procedures add greatly to the interest of the narrative, while the central character, if at times a trifle shadowy, nevertheless constitutes a clever study of an unusual criminal type. All in all, *The Trial* makes an admirable bedtime read – stimulating, yet soporific.

PETER PETERSON

Molloy

The plight of the elderly and bed-ridden is touchingly and sometimes humorously explored in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*. The eccentric and occasionally irascible central character, Molloy, describes his thoughts, hopes, fears and memories; especially the latter. A day on the beach when he looked for pebbles, his pathetic and largely unsuccessful attempts to communicate with his mother when she herself was ailing, his late-flowering love affair with Ruth or Edith (deterioration in his intellectual capacity make it impossible for him to recollect for certain which), favourite bicycle rides, all are richly delineated with telling detail. Mr Molloy battles bravely with problems of continence and failing memory (especially for names), only too real phenomena which many who cope with Senior Citizens will recognise. *Molloy* could well become required reading for social workers, geriatric nurses and others who come into frequent contact with the old.

GERARD BENSON

Das Kapital

Herr Marx in his new book has collected together a truly magnificent collection of historical anecdotes many of which have not been published in this country before. English readers will find those about the workings of the banks in Scotland particularly amusing. Many of his historical sketches are, of course, more serious but all are instructive and could be used by history teachers to brighten up their lessons. A slight drawback is that these fascinating pieces are embedded in a series of rather dull philosophical observations. No doubt that is the result of his German education but we understand that he is now living in London and we may hope for a more lively style to emerge in his future writings. We would certainly hope that this new writer has not used up all his capital in this work and that we may look forward to more such entertaining works in the future.

J. TIMSON

Among this week's contributors:

HELEN MCNEIL teaches in the School of English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

STEPHEN FENDER teaches American literature at University College, London. He has just completed a book on 19th-century western travel.

MICHAEL KUSTOW is an Associate Director of the National Theatre.

ALEX CALLINICOS is a junior research fellow at St Peter's College, Oxford, and editor of *Socialist Review*. His books include *Althusser's Marxism*.

ANDREW MOTION's collection of poems *The Pleasure Steamers* was published last year.

ALAN HOLLINGHURST is currently engaged on a study of Ronald Firbank.

Tony Miles

Chess

No 159 **Decisive game at Tilburg**

The third Interpolis was held recently at Tilburg. Predictably it was won by the World Champion, Karpov, but he had a surprisingly hard time holding off the challenge of his compatriot, Romanishin.

Karpov first got his nose in front in the ninth round with a long ending win over Hort. In the tenth the top games were drawn, Karpov with Timman and Romanishin with Kavalek. Last rounds are traditionally peaceful affairs but not this one. Of the first six games only two were drawn and only one without a struggle. Coincidentally all four Russians were paired together. Romanishin put the World Champion under pressure with a good win over Spassky, but Karpov responded with a typically efficient technical performance against Smyslov. Thus the final scores were Karpov 7½/11, Romanishin 7, Portisch 6½, Sax 6, Spassky, Sosonko, Timman and Larsen 5½, Hubner and Hort 5, Kavalek 4½ and Smyslov 2½.

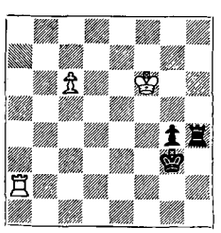
The decisive game:

White: A. Karpov **Black: V. Smyslov**

1.P-K4, P-QB3; 2.P-Q4, P-Q4; 3.N-Q2, PxP; 4.NxP, N-B3; 5.NxNch, KPxN; 6.P-B3, B-Q3; 7.B-Q3, Q-B2; 8.N-K2, B-N5; 9.B-K3, N-Q2; 10.Q-Q2; BxN; 11.QxB, 0-0-0; 12.0-0-0, K-N1, 13.K-N1, N-N3; 14.P-KN3, K-R1; 15.Q-B3, N-Q4; 16.B-QB1, N-K2; 17.B-QB4, N-B1; 18.KR-K1, P-KR3; 19.P-KR4, P-KR4; 20.B-N3, P-R3; 21.R-K2, R-Q2; 22.R(2)-Q2, R-K2; 23.R-Q3, N-N3; 24.B-K3, N-B1; 25.B-R4, N-N3; 26.B-N3, N-B1; 27.P-R3, N-N3; 28.Q-B5, Q-Q1; 29.Q-B3, Q-N5? 30.QxQ, PxQ; 31.P-QB4! N-Q2; 32.P-B5, B-B2; 33.P-Q5, PxP; 34.BxP, N-K4; 35.R-Q4, P-B4; 36.R-N2, R-QB1; 37.P-QN4, P-KN3; 38.B-N5, R(2)-K1; 39.R-Q5, B-N1; 40.K-B2, N-B3 and Black resigned.

Problem 159

White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 2 January.



Solution to problem 157

1.RxB! RxR; 2.Q-K1, R-B5; 3.P-KN3, Q-R6; 4.BxR! PxB; 5.B-N4! Resigns.

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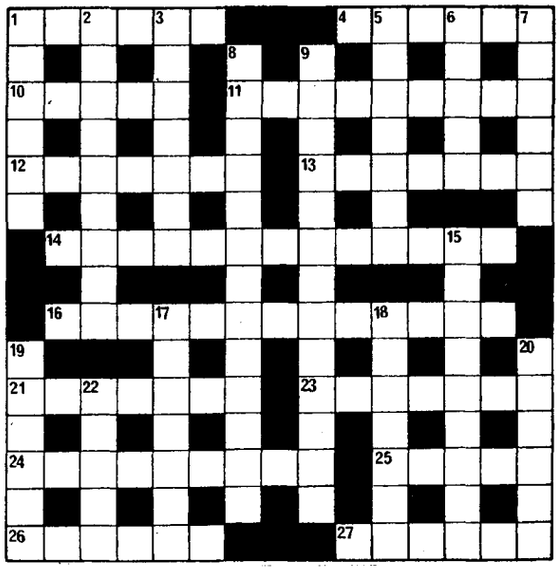
Weekend Crossword 1326

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1326, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 28 December.



ACROSS

1 As an actor I follow the company in a dig (6).
4 Race which takes a composer to heart (6).
10 'They kept the noiseless ——— of their way' (Gray) (5).
11 Revelled when the Tories turned socialist (9).
12 If a boy disappeared, the lamp holder would make a noise (7).
13 'This is a slight unmeritable man, Meet to be sent on ———' *(J. Caesar)* (7).
14 Strange men do couple with it for coppers (7, 6).
16 Slash pensions wildly since this is given at school (7, 6).
21 Site of Horace's novel castle (7).
23 Ministers have it put in the papers (7).
24 The brief season means there is a deficit (9).
25 I went round the twist (5).
26 Penniless vagrants would be reverse of well-dressed (6).
27 Corners for old people (6).

DOWN

1 Cargo thrown away so that the planes are on time (6).
2 Fruit in a tin with a lot mixed up (9).
3 Steal up on God as a composer (7).
5 A tiller turned according to the letter (7).
6 Actress who appears in original or enterprising roles (5).
7 Monster from a nation under the sea (6).
8 She is high-born but turns sorry in places (8, 5).
9 Ballet which would bear fruit if we lost the election (9, 4).
15 The bird would be angry if the man left (9).
17 Continuously having highest part at the bottom (7).
18 Look at next page inside cover for this town (7).
19 Garment made of horn and stuck (6).
20 As escorts we are put above a certain woman's (6).
22 Artist holds tool for girl (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1324

C	O	N	T	E	N	D	E	R	■	T	R	A	C	T
A	■	A	■	X	■	E	■	U	■	A	■	R	■	O
P	O	N	T	O	O	N	■	N	U	M	E	R	A	L
O	■	K	■	N	■	I	■	N	■	I	■	O	■	E
N	I	E	C	E	■	M	A	Y	F	L	O	W	E	R
■	■	E	■	R	■	■	M	■	■	■	E	■	A	■
P	I	N	E	A	P	P	L	E	■	S	I	D	O	N
I	■	■	T	■	R	■	D	■	K	■	■	■	C	■
P	U	L	S	E	■	O	B	E	D	I	E	N	C	E
E	■	I	■	■	■	V	■	■	■	N	■	E	■	■
R	E	N	A	S	C	E	N	T	■	F	O	I	S	T
O	■	E	■	A	■	N	■	O	■	L	■	T	■	E
L	E	A	R	N	E	D	■	W	R	I	T	H	E	S
L	■	G	■	D	■	E	■	E	■	N	■	E	■	T
S	E	E	D	Y	■	R	E	D	S	T	A	R	T	S

Prizewinners to No 1324

Violet Ormerod (Bristol)
Mrs Van Heyningen (Newport)
Alison Crawshaw (London W2)

APPOINTMENTS

NEW STATESMAN

Editorial Secretary/Assistant

Very busy NS editorial department needs a superperson to bring some order to our chaos. Usual typing (shorthand not necessary), telex, lots of phone work — but more important, we want a really good organiser with a flexible approach to hours and able to turn hands and feet to anything that crops up. Must be impervious to panic. In return we offer good (real) coffee on tap plus an informal and stimulating work atmosphere. The paper is socialist, libertarian, but non-sectarian: political commitment along these lines would be an advantage.

Salary: £4,750 p.a. plus LVs, 4 weeks' holiday.

Applications to Joanne Hurst at NEW STATESMAN, 10 Great Turnstile, London WC1. Tel: 405 8471.

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2. Half-time Executive Assistant

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For further details and an application form please contact the **Personnel Office, Amnesty International, 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, or telephone 01-836 7788 ext. 289.**

COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS TO BE RETURNED BY 4 JANUARY 1980.

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2. **Collating and disseminating information on this subject.**
3. **Establishment of crime prevention projects.**

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Closing date: **7 January 1980.**

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